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The Origins and Role of the Communist Party of Hungary in the Revolutions of 1918-1919

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For Mary

Preface

The Communist Party of Hungary was founded in November, 1918, by a group of Russian-trained Hungarian former prisoners of war and indigenous left socialists for the purpose of overthrowing the democratic government of Mihály Károlyi and establishing a revolutionary beachhead in Hungary to spread the "bacilli of Bolshevism" in Europe. Internal disunity and the threat of foreign invasion, exploited by the communists, caused the downfall of the Károlyi government and the subsequent establishment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in March of 1919. The Hungarian Soviet Republic, led by Béla Kun, fell after 133 days of existence. It was followed by Admiral Nicholas Horthy's counterrevolutionary regime, which ruled until the end of World War II. In early 1945 the Communist Party reemerged from the underground to become a decisive force in postwar politics, and within three years established its complete authority in Hungary.

This study is concerned with the background and history of the communists' first, shortlived role in Hungary, and specifically with the intellectual prehistory and ideological and organizational achievements of the Communist Party of Hungary in the democratic and proletarian revolutions of 1918 and 1919. Since most of the founders and early leaders of the Communist Party of Hungary, including Béla Kun and more than nineteen People's Commissars of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, fell victim to the Soviet purges, and also because Stalinist party historians after 1928 viewed the Kun regime as a Luxemburgist deviation rather than a bona fide proletarian revolution, very little information concerning the party's early history, and particularly its Russian origins, was available until 1957. Since then, in an effort to restore the political credentials of these fallen communists, several previously suppressed documents, a score of memoirs, and many specialized monographs have been published in Hungary and in the Soviet Union. These new data and additional primary sources from the years 1917 to 1928 necessitate a careful

reconsideration of the crucial yet virtually unknown formative period of the party's history.

The process of ideological and political "rehabilitation" of old Bolsheviks is far from complete in Hungary, and some information is still missing. The record of Hungarian communist activities in Russia after November, 1918, has not yet been made public, platforms and programmatic statements of socialist opposition groups in the period preceding the formation of the Communist Party of Hungary are unavailable, data on the Kun-Chicherin correspondence in the spring and summer of 1918 are missing, and there is insufficient documentary evidence on charges and countercharges traded among Hungarian exile communists concerning the record of various opposition groups during the period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. As a result, there are unavoidable gaps in the narrative. However, with the evidence that is available it should be possible to gain a fresh insight into the party's early history and reach some valid conclusions concerning its place and meaning in modern Hungarian political history and its significance in the development of the international communist movement.

Space limitations do not permit a thorough investigation of many otherwise relevant diplomatic, economic, social, cultural, and literary aspects of the October revolution of 1918 and the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919. However, various statistical charts, documentary materials previously unpublished in English, reconstructed party organizational blueprints, and biographies of several leading communists are included as appendixes. This additional material, which is supplementary to the narrative, is designed to support and document some of the more unorthodox arguments advanced in the text.

It is my pleasure to acknowledge my indebtedness to Professors Henry L. Roberts and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski of Columbia University for their intellectual and material guidance and generous help from the very inception of this study. I am also grateful to the Committee on Research and Publications of the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace for its research grant enabling me to spend a most rewarding summer at the library of the Institution. Thanks are due to Witold S. Sworakowski and Karol Maichel of the Hoover Institution staff and to George Löwy of the Columbia University Library for their technical assistance. Nancy Clark's editorial advice has been of enormous help in seeing the manuscript through to completion. To my wife, for her patience, encouragement, and

unerring critical judgment on matters of style and substance, I owe a special debt that words can never adequately express. For errors of fact and interpretation in this study, I am, of course, alone responsible.

R. L. T.

Middletown, Connecticut
March, 1966

Contents

Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic

Chapter 1

THE BEGINNINGS OF SOCIALISM IN HUNGARY

Socialism was brought to Hungary in the 1860s literally in the knapsacks of itinerant Hungarian, Austrian, Bohemian, and German journeymen who had been exposed to the ideas of Ferdinand Lassalle and Karl Marx while learning their trades in Germany. On February 23, 1868,[1] these men founded the first politically motivated group of the Budapest proletariat, the General Workers' Association.

Hungary was at that time predominantly agrarian, with a numerically small industrial working class.[2] As a result, in a country accustomed to the political authoritarianism of a conservative ruling aristocracy and lacking a politically conscious urban middle class, organized socialist activities were at a great disadvantage. In particular, they labored under three main handicaps. Socially, the preponderance of foreign-born skilled workers and immigrant Jewish craftsmen in the first Hungarian workingmen's associations made such groups appear as distinctly alien phenomena, and hence of dubious value in a xenophobic country. Politically, slavish imitation of the programmatic statements and tactical solutions of the German Social Democratic Party in a country vastly less developed economically tended to alienate many would-be joiners and engendered a process of sectarian inbreeding and ideological sterility within the movement. Organizationally, the most significant limitation on effective operation was the overlapping structure of personnel of the political and economic arms of the working-class movement.[3]

[1] Tibor Erényi (ed.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 1, 1848–1890, Budapest: Szikra, 1951, pp. 73–75.

[2] In the 1880s industrial workers made up less than 1 per cent of Hungary's population. Gyula Rézler, *A Magyar Nagyipari Munkásság Kialakulása* [*Development of the Hungarian Industrial Working Class*], 2nd ed., Budapest: Faust, 1945, p. 98.

[3] Through its full-time directors and network of agents the General Workers' Sickness and Accident Insurance Bureau (founded in 1870) controlled and determined the direction of all socialist activities in Hungary between 1870 and 1890.

Such external and internal limitations had far-reaching effects. They established the interdependence of the powerful Workers' Insurance Bureau (an essentially Lassallian proposition) and the reformist majority of the Budapest workers and set the precedent of concurrent trade-union and socialist party membership in the labor movement. They also contributed materially to the failure of all five of the attempts made between 1869 and 1890 to form a workers' party in Hungary and resulted in the formation of militant Marxist and internationalist factions which later became destructive and corrosive factors in the movement and were instrumental in causing its eventual disintegration in the spring of 1919.

The first Hungarian socialist programs were designed to achieve two goals: universal manhood suffrage, and through this a direct parliamentary representation of the working class. The results of the first twenty years of socialist activities, however, caused the Hungarian leadership to give up some of its cherished illusions, especially those regarding practical socialism and the state.

The sternly antilabor attitudes of the Hungarian government doomed plans for state-supported cooperatives in the 1860s. Next, the socialists were forced to realize that the state did not feel bound by its usual legal standards in treating socialist organizations as bona fide representatives of the proletariat. The so-called "sedition trials" following the Paris Commune, antianarchist laws of the 1880s, and a harsh Austro-Hungarian version of Bismarck's antisocialist laws repeatedly dispelled such aspirations.[4] The third major disappointment was the failure of the socialists to act as an interest group for the disenfranchised proletariat and to press their demands on the opposition party of the day.[5] Fourth, the socialists were forced to conclude that the movement in Budapest could not break

[4] Tibor Erényi and Edit S. Vincze (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 2, 1890–1900, Budapest: Szikra, 1954; Ferenc Agárdi, "A Kalapácsos Ember [Man with the Hammer]," in Géza Hegedűs (ed.), *Századok és Tanulságok* [*Centuries and Their Lessons*], Budapest: Anonymous, 1946, pp. 266–272; Tibor Erényi, "A Magyarországi Munkásmozgalom és az I. Internacionálé [The Hungarian Workers' Movement and the First International]," in Tibor Erényi and Endre Kovács (eds.), *Az I. Internacionálé és Magyarország* [*The First International and Hungary*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1964, esp. pp. 304–366; and Edit S. Vincze, *Küzdelem az Önálló Proletárpárt Megteremtéséért Magyarországon, 1848–1890* [*Struggle for the Establishment of an Independent Proletarian Party in Hungary*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1963.

[5] Neither the ruling Liberal nor the opposition Independence Party was willing to entertain petitions from delegations of organized workers.

out of its isolation unless and until it could be separated from the politically vulnerable Workers' Insurance Bureau, whose charter prohibited involvement in active politics.[6] Finally, Hungarian socialists found themselves strategically at a disadvantage to the Austrian and German socialists (particularly Adler and Bebel), who never ceased to interfere with and attempt to control the internal affairs of the Hungarian socialist movement.[7]

In the late 1880s another generation of socialists came of age. Mostly radicals trained by the German Social Democratic Party, alienated by the "insurance bureaucrats" and frustrated by their futile strategy, this new group argued for more militancy in strike actions and demanded official espousal of the "principles of proletarian internationalism" and rejection of the "rotten patriotism" that had helped to dampen the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat.

These internal pressures, combined with prodding from abroad for a closing of socialist ranks in Hungary, became particularly strong after the Hainfeld "unity congress" of the Austrian Social Democratic Party in 1889. Later that year the Hungarian socialists joined the Second International at its first congress in Paris. After a year of intense power struggle with the Marxist reformist majority, the Marxist internationalist minority won out and established the Hungarian Social Democratic Party at the new party's first congress on Dec. 7, 1890.[8]

As this brief survey indicates, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party was a product typical of its age and environment. Its potential membership was confined to a small urban working class deriving political and theoretical guidance from the German social-

[6] The possible confiscation of the Insurance Bureau's considerable assets derived from 50,000 dues-paying members, the curtailment of its operations through territorial restrictions by the Minister of the Interior, and the exclusion from certain industries by employers' associations were high stakes to be risked for the sake of short-term political goals.

[7] Magda Aranyossi, "A Korai Magyar Szocialista Mozgalom Nemzetközi Kapcsolatairól [Early Hungarian Socialist Movements: Their International Connections]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 3, 1960, pp. 138–154.

[8] Samu Jászai (ed.), *A Magyarországi Szocialista Párt Alakulása az* 1890. *évi Pártgyülés Jegyzőkönyve* [*The Formation of the Socialist Party of Hungary: Minutes of the Party Congress of Dec.* 7–8, 1890], Budapest: Népszava, 1916. See also Edit S. Vincze, *A Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt Megalakulása és Tevékenységének Első Évei,* 1890–1896 [*The Founding and the First Years of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1961, and Tibor Erényi, *A Magyar Szakszervezeti Mozgalom Kezdetei* [*The Beginnings of the Hungarian Trade Union Movement*], Budapest: Táncsics, 1962.

ists; its ideology consisted of dogmatic intransigencies and naive, largely ineffectual concessions to the realities of its forbidding political habitat. The Hungarian socialists, led by a small executive group of Hungarians, Schwabians, and hastily assimilated Jews and backed in the 1890s by a relatively prosperous "workers' aristocracy," were little more than an alienated and greatly outnumbered band of polite rebels with high hopes but extremely remote chances for success.[9]

Socialist Politics Before World War I

The course of the revolutions of 1918–1919, the communists' conduct, and the reasons for their eventual failure were to a large extent predetermined by the political, organizational, and ideological development of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and by the influence of the bourgeois middle-class "second-reform generation" during the twenty-five-year period preceeding World War I. Shortly after the first congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, Hungarian socialists—hoping to emulate the successful parliamentary strategy of Bebel and Liebknecht in Germany—resolved to obtain representation for the working class in the legislature through a direct participation in the electoral process. Given the country's political atmosphere and the party's limited appeal and meager resources, however, there was little hope for the realization of such ambitions. As G. D. H. Cole put it, "Politically, the conditions remained, right up to 1914, entirely incompatible with the growth of any socialist party capable of making effective use of parliamentary methods."[10] This statement, like views held by other foreign observers, seems to attribute undue significance to external factors (government pressure, hostile legislation, and police terror) and perhaps not enough to internal aspects of the socialist movement in

[9] "The Social Democrats were an organised, disciplined body, but the radical Marxian doctrines to which they had subscribed had taught them to look outside Hungary for their friends and allies and they were regarded with suspicion by many other Hungarians as a 'rootless' and unpatriotic element; the more so as their intellectual leadership was preponderantly Jewish. . . . [Therefore] it can be said that neither the agrarian nor the industrial proletariat had perceptibly more political influence in 1910 than before 1848." C. A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary,* 1929–1945, vol. 1, Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1955, p. 12.

[10] G. D. H. Cole, *The Second International,* part 2, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1956, p. 570.

explaining the party's complete lack of success in gaining parliamentary representation.[11]

One of the most important socialist weaknesses lay in the party's attitudes and policies toward the peasantry, the largest, most exploited, and potentially most revolutionary force in Hungary at that time. Low pay, hard work, and a ruthless exercise of police power by local authorities prompted several protracted and wide-spread harvester strikes between 1894 and 1904.[12] Bloody encounters between rebellious agrarian laborers and imported strike breakers often climaxed in a series of so-called "peasant trials," at times with hundreds of defendants.

Year after year delegations from rural "storm centers" approached the socialist leadership in Budapest for legal advice, political guidance, and some tangible expression of solidarity on the part of the organized workers with the rural proletariat. Because of the chronic shortage of funds in the party chest, legal restrictions imposed on socialist activities outside urban centers, and a basic unwillingness to become involved in imponderable rural problems, such overtures remained unanswered. An editorial entitled "Peasant Politics," published in the socialist daily, *Népszava* [*The People's Voice*], in the summer of 1907, presented some ideological justification for the socialists' agrarian strategy:[13]

[11] Since franchise was not extended to more than 5 to 8 per cent of the adult male population until the Soviet Republic of 1919, socialist groups remained outside the pale of political participation and were forced to explore other legitimate outlets for their organized activities. It was not until 1872 that the craft-union type of association was considered a bona fide legal entity, not until 1891 that the word "socialist" was permitted to appear in print to denote politically oriented workers' organizations, not until 1899 that the first national trade union received its government-approved charter, and not until the early 1900s that the existence of a national trade-union council was recognized. It was only after late 1917 that local groups of the Social Democratic Party were allowed to function as parts of a centralized political party of the working class.

[12] Miklós Koroda, "Az Alföldi Parasztmozgalmak [Peasant Movements on the Lowlands]," in Hegedűs, *Centuries . . .*, pp. 305–317, and Ferenc Mucsi, "Földmunkás és Szegényparaszt Mozgalmak Magyarországon 1900–1906-ig [Agrarian Laborer and Poor Peasant Movements in Hungary between 1900 and 1906]," in Ferenc Pölöskei and Kálmán Szakács (eds.), *Földmunkás és Szegényparaszt Mozgalmak Magyarországon,* 1848–1948 [*Agrarian Laborer and Poor Peasant Movements in Hungary*], vol. 1, Budapest: A Mezőgazdasági és Erdészeti Dolgozók Szakszervezete, 1957, pp. 315–393.

[13] "Peasant Politics. *Népszava* (Budapest), July 26, 1907," Tibor Erényi *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 3, 1900–1907, Budapest:Szikra, 1955, pp. 548–549.

> The peasantry, particularly its poorest stratum, is hostile both to capitalism and to the large landowners. Thus it seems a plausible idea to accept the peasantry as an ally in the struggle of the [industrial] proletariat. . . .
>
> The peasantry is opposed to capitalism, but in a different manner. The peasantry is reactionary in the true sense of the word: it would like to destroy capitalism, restore the old conditions (crop economy, domestic industry and handicrafts), in other words, the "good old days." The peasant sees only usury capital [in the form of land banks] and wants to destroy everything that is modern. . . . The workers do not want to destroy new production methods, but to abolish exploitation . . . and to retain new technology. . . .
>
> This tremendous difference in basic attitudes makes it impossible to enter into even temporary alliances with the peasantry. The workers look forward to and represent a better future in our society. The peasantry harks back to the past, to primitive conditions, to barbarism. . . .

It is worth noting that this viewpoint was published ten years after a group of radical socialists had left the party to found an agrarian Independent Socialist Party.[14] On the tide of votes from radical peasant villages, despite the severly limited franchise and police terror, this party promptly sent its leader, István Várkonyi, to the parliament. Seven years after that, another group of agrarian-oriented dissident socialists had formed the Reconstructed Social Democratic Party of Hungary, which within a few months not only had its leader, Vilmos Mezőfi, elected to the legislature, but also succeeded in enlisting the support of the entire Transylvanian organization of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.[15] Finally, this statement of policy appeared at the same time that the Várkonyi- and Mezőfi-supported Association of Agrarian Laborers came into being, an organization which gained more dues-paying members in four months than the socialists had at any time during their forty-year history.

On the basis of available evidence it appears that, next to its uninspired Marxist orthodoxy, the party's main weakness lay in its organizational structure. Probably the most authoritative statement

[14] Gyula Rézler, *Development . . .*, pp. 190–193.

[15] Zoltán Bodrogközy, *A Magyar Agrármozgalmak Története* [*History of Agrarian Movements in Hungary*], Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1929, pp. 37–89; Tibor Erényi, "Földmunkás és Szegényparaszt Mozgalmak az Első Világháború Elötti Években, 1906–1914 [Agrarian Laborer and Poor Peasant Movements in the Years Before World War I]," in Pölöskei, *Agrarian Laborer . . .*, vol. 1, pp. 394–450; and László Szabó, "Adalékok az Ujjászervezett Szociáldemokrata Párt Történetéhez [Data on the History of the Reconstructed Social Democratic Party of Hungary]," *Jászkunság*, no. 3, 1964.

on the problem was contained in the Hungarian delegate's report to the 1907 Stuttgart congress of the Second International:[16]

> The party has no organizations of its own and is forced to rely on the trade unions. . . . In Hungary there is no law providing for freedom of assembly . . . which is regulated by ministerial decree from time to time. . . . Political and workers' associations are forbidden to maintain regional or local organizations. Due to the ministerial veto power, our party has not been able to form a single political club or association.
>
> The trade unions are not allowed by law to deal with political matters or to engage in organizing strikes. [Recently] . . . however, class conscious workers have formed so-called "free associations" which operate secretly . . . thus evading the law of the ruling classes.
>
> Free associations are the basic element of our party's organization. Wherever there are organized workers, the free associations of each craft elect their stewards . . . who, in turn, constitute the local party organization led by an elected executive. The local party organizations of each county elect delegates to the annual congress. . . .
>
> The party's actions are *decided* and *executed* by the stewards' conference representing each craft and trade. . . . [Italics supplied.]

Such a situation not only resulted in decentralized decision making and rendered coordinated activities nearly impossible, but contributed greatly to the evolvement of a peculiar style of leadership perhaps unmatched by other parties of the Second International.

Trade-union shop stewards, who constituted the real power in the party, were not conspicious as individuals or as a body for their initiative and ideological sophistication. At the annual elections of national officers of the political and economic arms of the movement[17] personal popularity, qualities of "sober deliberation," and intellectual mediocrity were at a premium in the eyes of the trade-union delegates. An extensive perusal of socialist literature of the years 1903 to 1914 indicates that, with the exception of the brilliant Zsigmond

[16] "Report of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party to the International (Socialist) Congress To Be Held in Stuttgart Aug. 18–24, 1907," in Erényi, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 3, pp. 552–553. János Matos, one of the Hungarian delegates, reported back a year later to the socialist congress on the International's reaction to his talk on party organization. (*Minutes of the Fifteenth Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party Held in Budapest on April* 19–23, 1908, Budapest: Népszava, 1908, pp. 232–233.

[17] These were the editors of *Népszava* and *Szocializmus* (the theoretical monthly), the department heads of the central party secretariat, and the directors and full-time executive of the Workers' Insurance Bureau and trade-union pension funds.

Kunfi, typical products of this selection process—Ernő Garami, Dezső Bokányi, Jakab Weltner, Vilmos Böhm, and Sándor Garbai—were competent organizers, good orators, and insufficiently prepared exponents of Marxism.[18]

The party's reliance on the trade-union structure and the resultant power of the trade unions created an atmosphere conducive to the development of a permanent party bureaucracy which could not readily be held accountable for its actions and which, by virtue of its possession of all key positions in the movement, could perpetuate itself at will. Properly applied working-class pressure in the form of skillfully managed political strikes might have brought tangible concessions from one or more cabinets of amateur aristocrat politicians who controlled the legislature between 1905 and 1910. However, Hungarian trade-union leaders, chosen more on the basis of seniority and experience than for political ability, were inept in the field of practical politics and often failed to take advantage of political opportunities provided by some of the weak Hungarian cabinets.

Although individual trade unions were frequently successful in minor skirmishes, the party could never fully assert its considerable strength in major battles. Three decisive encounters between the party and the government should illustrate this. In 1907 a nationwide strike was called after the cabinet crisis had already been solved, thus enabling the government to concentrate on suppressing the labor

[18] The two types of sources consulted to evaluate the quality of socialist agitation and propaganda were pamphlets on topical matters and key speeches at annual socialist party congresses between 1908 and 1913. Manó Buchinger, *A Lakásnyomor* [*The Housing Misery*], Budapest: Világosság, 1906; Sándor Csizmadia, *Mit Akarunk? A Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt Programjának Magyarázata* [*What Are Our Goals? An Explanation of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party's Program*], Budapest: Népszava, 1903; Zsigmond Kunfi, *A Másik Ut: Tanulmányok a Szocializmus Köréből* [*The Other Road: Studies on Socialism*], Budapest: Politzer Zsigmond & Fia, 1911. The following congressional speeches were of unusual interest: Sándor Garbai, Zsigmond Kunfi, and Dezső Bokányi in *Minutes of the Fifteenth Congress* . . . (1908), pp. 149–160, 199–201, 240–244; Jakab Weltner, Zsigmond Kunfi, and Sándor Garbai in *Minutes of the Sixteenth Congress* . . . (1909), pp. 107–115, 126–133, 135–147, 178–183; Zsigmond Kunfi, Ernő Garami, and Péter Agoston in *Minutes of the Seventeenth Congress* . . . (1910), pp. 119–132, 145–150, 150–155, 173–191; Jakab Weltner, Ernő Garami, Gyula Hajdu, and Sándor Csizmadia in *Minutes of the Eighteenth Congress* . . . (1911), pp. 110–133, 144–157, 160–163, 173–184, 189–201; Mór Preusz, Zsigmond Kunfi, Jakab Weltner, and Ernő Garami in *Minutes of the Nineteenth Congress* . . . (1912), pp. 91–94, 114–136, 137–147, 190–197, 199–203; Manó Buchinger, Ernő Garami, Jakab Weltner, and Zsigmond Kunfi in *Minutes of the Twentieth Congress* . . . (1913), pp. 127–139, 182–191, 221–228, 240–260, 264–278.

unrest.[19] In May 1912, in the midst of another major crisis, the party decided at the last moment not to mobilize the trade unions. Contrary to instructions, however, a disorganized mob of 200,000 workers demonstrated in Budapest, only to be dispersed by the mounted police, leaving several dead and wounded trade unionists on the streets. A year later these events were about to be repeated, but this time the party called off the mass demonstrations, even though they promised to be well organized and successful. Thus the multitude of often successful locally organized economic strikes did not amount to a single successful nationwide political strike, and hence to a realization of the party's goals.

Socialist Intraparty Opposition

Despite the strategic miscalculations and successive failures of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and the intellectual mediocrity of its leadership, the socialist movement did not function in an intellectual vacuum. Opposition within the party to the tactics and ideology of the socialist leadership came from three sources: the agrarian radicals (Várkonyi and Mezőfi) attacked the party for its neglect of the peasantry.[20] Partly because of irreconcilable personality conflicts and partly because of their insistence on the primacy of agrarian issues, these men and their followers were soon expelled.[21] With their departure in 1900 the peasant problem ceased to be a subject of serious debate in the movement. The second wave of opposition was led by Ervin Szabó, who made his first appearance at the

19 For data on strike and strikers in Hungary see Appendix B. For an interesting case study on socialist strategy during a government crisis see Ferenc Mucsi, "A Szociáldemokrata Párt Vezetőinek Paktuma a Fejérváry Kormánnyal és a Választójogi Tömegmozgalom Kibontakozása, 1905 Julius–Október [The Socialist Executive's Pact with the Fejérvary Cabinet and the Unfolding of the Mass Struggle for Universal Manhood Suffrage, July–October, 1905]," *Századok*, vol. 99, nos. 1–2, 1965, pp. 33–91. The crisis of 1910 is analyzed in Ferenc Pölöskei, *A Koalicio Felbomlása és a Nemzeti Munkapárt Megalakulása*, 1909–1910 [*The Disintegration of the Coalition Cabinet and the Formation of the Party of National Labor*], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1963.

20 For the program of the Várkonyi-led "independent socialist" faction see Erényi, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 2, p. 411. The program of the Mezőfi-led "reconstructed social democratic" faction may be found in Erényi, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 3, p. 20.

21 Várkonyi was expelled at the Fifth Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party on June 11, 1897; cf. Erényi, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 2, p. 440. Mezőfi was expelled three years later at the Seventh Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party; cf. Erényi, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 3, pp. 11–14.

1904 party congress. Third, there was an amorphous group of young leftist-socialist intellectuals who, while deriving many of their arguments from Szabó's theses, never fully abandoned the party, but remained within it in the role of devil's advocate.

Next to György Lukács, who was one of his early disciples, Ervin Szabó (Szontágh) has been the most influential theoretician in the history of Hungarian socialism. He played a unique role in educating an entire generation of leftist, socialist, and nonsocialist intellectuals, most of whom became the founders and leaders of the Communist Party of Hungary in 1918–1919.[22]

The son of a middle-class Jewish family, Szabó attended the University of Vienna from 1899 to 1903 as a student of philosophy and history. He was an avid reader of Marx, Nietzsche, Proudhon, Lavrov, and Kropotkin. Influenced by Russian exiles living in Vienna, he became a convinced Marxist[23] and after his return to Budapest organized a socialist student group. He was also entrusted by the party with the publication of a three-volume edition of works by Marx and Engels.[24] During the two years following his return he became increasingly disturbed by the stifling atmosphere of orthodoxy in the party and wrote a series of articles and studies highly critical of its leadership.

Szabó elaborated on a set of propositions designed to reform the party's organization, strategy, and tactics. He criticized the socialist program for its "timid parliamentarism," denounced the party's statutes for their built-in safeguards designed "to perpetuate the rule of a small trade-union oligarchy" over a politically uneducated working class, and offered an alternative ideology to the slavishly imitated German orthodoxy. His contention was that it was "unnecessary and harmful" to expect every member of the party to adhere fully to the program, and that individual consent to basic socialist goals was sufficient and more meaningful than the customary recitals of social-

[22] József Révai, "Szabó Ervin: Helye Magyar Munkásmozgalomban [Ervin Szabó: His Place in the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movements]," Introduction to Ervin Szabó *Társadalmi és Pártharcok a* 48–49-*es Magyar Forradalomban* [*Social and Party Struggles in the Hungarian Revolution of* 1848–1849], Budapest: Szikra, 1949, pp. 5–28.

[23] Oscar Jászi, "Ervin Szabó," *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences,* vol. 14, New York: Macmillan, 1934, p. 501.

[24] Szabó's introduction to the first volume still ranks as the best study in Hungarian Marxist literature.

ist principles at party gatherings. At the 1905 party congress he spoke out in defense of intraparty democracy:[25]

> Is it possible to propagandize the great ideals of socialism without grave compromises . . . in a party which has adopted for its internal use principles of military organization that are characterized by relationships of party corporals and party recruits? Is it possible in a party where the customary mode of warfare is this: the leaders issue orders and the men blindly and obediently march wherever they are ordered to go? . . . Not soldiers, but insurgents and other voluntary fighters should be trained for socialism—men who know *why* they are fighting the way they are fighting. . . .
>
> Let us never forget that socialism must be a society of free men. Will those who have fought for their freedom under military orders be able to live with that freedom?

Szabó's grand design for the rejuvenation of the Hungarian workers' movement may be best characterized as a substitution of French anarchosyndicalism for German Marxism as a guideline for Hungarian socialists. In his opinion the party's record of unexploited local initiative and the promising growth of trade unions created a situation analogous to that which had preceeded the formation of the *Confédération Générale du Travail* in 1902. In France Millerand had joined the bourgeois Waldeck-Rousseau cabinet and "betrayed" the movement; in Hungary Ernő Garami and his colleagues "deserted" the striking unions at crucial times. In France the betrayed syndicats had joined forces with socialist thinkers of moral integrity (such as Hubert Lagardelle, to whose journal, *Mouvement Socialiste,* Szabó contributed regularly) and embarked on the road of revolutionary syndicalism; in Hungary the conditions were ripe for the proletariat to assert its homogeneity and self-sufficiency and liberate itself from the domination of German-style "party corporals."[26]

[25] Ernő Szontágh [Ervin Szabó], "Hogyan Módositsuk a Pártszervezeti Szabályzatot? [How to Modify the Party Statutes?]" (suggestion submitted to the [thirteenth] 1905 congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party concerning point 3 of its agenda), excerpts in Erényi, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 3, pp. 263–264.

[26] These theses are further refined and elaborated in Ervin Szabó, *Szindikalizmus és Szociáldemokrácia* [*Syndicalism and Social Democracy*], Budapest: Deutsch, 1908; and Ervin Szabó, *A Tőke és a Munka Harca* [*The Struggle of Capital and Labor*], 2nd. ed., Budapest: A Közoktatási Népbiztosság Kiadása, 1919, esp. chaps. 6–8. See also András Gedő, "Szabó Ervin és a Marxista Filozófia [Ervin Szabó and the Marxist Philosophy]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 1, 1957, pp. 67–98.

The ideology of revolutionary syndicalism combined elements of Marx, Proudhon, and Bakunin. From Marx it derived its emphasis on the economic basis of society and the necessity of revolutionary consciousness; from Proudhon, the distrust of the state and the emphasis on freedom; from Bakunin, the belief in violence.[27] A prominent role was assigned to trade unions in the struggle against the state: they were not merely instruments of class struggle for economic betterment, but suitable vehicles to prepare and fight for a social revolution as well. Conditions favorable to the fashioning of revolutionary situations were created through industrial action and unrestricted class warfare; this would lead to a general political strike which, when properly managed, should cause the downfall of the capitalist society and herald the beginning of a new society of the proletariat governed by the national federation of syndicats.

Szabó's arguments had implications for his disciples which were often contrary to his own professed intentions. Although there is no evidence that he ever subscribed fully to the syndicalist definition of an "active minority" ("It is not the voters, the passive people who count, but the active ones. For the syndicalists, not the number but the will lays down the law. Quality prevails over quantity"),[28] there is ample proof that his followers utilized every aspect of syndicalist strategy, both as members of the wartime antimilitarist groups and as leaders of the Communist Party in 1919.

József Révai, once an anarchosyndicalist follower of Szabó, made a persuasive case in explaining the reasons for the lack of mass appeal of the syndicalist message:[29]

> In a country where the trade-union movement practically replaced the party, where the left opposition could [only] demand the liberation of the workers' party from the omnipotence of trade unions, syndicalism had little ground because the trade-union bureaucracy had taken away its "bread." . . . Also, because of the presence of many semifeudal institutions in the building of the Hungarian state, workers had no chance to saturate themselves with illusions of parliamentarism, hence they could not very well become alienated from parliamentary reforms. This is why there were no customers for the syndicalist merchandise, and why Ervin Szabó—who could not and did not want

[27] Jászi, "Socialism," *Encyclopedia . . .*, p. 205.

[28] Quoted in Carl Landauer, *European Socialism*, vol. 1, Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1959, p. 344.

[29] József Révai, *Marxizmus, Népiesség, Magyarság* [*Marxism, Populism, Hungarianism*], Budapest: Szikra, 1949, p. 57.

to ally himself with the left opposition within the Social Democratic Party—remained without mass support.

In addition to antidemocratic tendencies born out of desperation of socialist failures, revolutionary syndicalism also imparted a belief in anarchistic means as legitimate weapons of class struggle. As later events proved, however, conspiratorial societies did not take root in Hungary as they had in Russia. In the absence of a Bolshevik type of tightly knit leadership, syndicalist elitism and anarchist propensity for violence and individual action could not be combined and translated into successful revolutionary action until the Bolshevik experience was transplanted to Hungary through Béla Kun and his group in November, 1918.

According to the recollections of Béla Szántó, one of the leaders of the socialist left wing, an informal opposition group, primarily of Jewish middle-class origin, came into being after 1903 in protest against the party's recently enacted statutes.[30] At various trade-union conferences and party gatherings they frequently found themselves in opposition to the socialist executive on issues of party discipline, restrictions on intraparty democracy, and unsavory methods of leadership. Personality conflicts with the anti-intellectual trade-union leaders, who took their cue from Bebel in attributing ulterior motives to the educated members of the left opposition—lawyers, students, and journalists—resulted in venomous debates and lifelong sentiments of suspicion and hatred among Hungary's leading socialists.[31]

The only concerted open attack on the leadership took place

[30]This at first informal group included Béla Szántó, Jenő László, and Lajos Tarczai. Around 1905–1906 Béla Vágó, László Rudas, György Nyisztor, Dezső Somló, Artur Illés, and Gyula Alpári joined the ranks of dissenters. Béla Szántó, "Tanulmány az Első Világháború Elötti Magyarországi Ellenzéki Szociáldemokrata Irányzatokról [A Study on the Opposition Groups in the Hungarian Social Democratic Party before the First World War]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 4, 1962, pp. 134–135.

[31]For example, this is how Károly Teszársz, a member of the party executive, characterized Gyula Alpári in the heat of the congressional debate in 1910: "Alpári has not been a comrade of mine for a long time and now he cannot make me out a liar. I know him well, so he cannot pull any tricks on me. Several times I had to order young Alpári out of the party office so he would not become a parasite there. And now what became of him? Nothing. Since we did not hire him, he is now making a living from peddling his opinions [in the form of 'slanderous' articles written for German left socialist newspapers, copies of which he earlier had tried to sell in the meeting hall]. . . . I cannot respect this kind of 'businessman.' (Cheers from the floor.)" *Minutes of the Seventeenth Congress . . .* (1910), p. 106.

at the fourteenth congress of the party in 1907. At this congress, after a two-year accumulation of grievances by the opposition,[32] Béla Szántó, Jenő László, and Béla Vágó delivered strong indictments on all fields of party work: Szántó criticized the organizational shortcomings of the women's and youth organizations, László derided certain apparently unsuccessful agitation and propaganda techniques used in working-class districts, and Vágó took exception to "dictatorial methods" employed by the party executive in its dealings with the nationality section and condemned the party's alleged lack of consistency in its day-to-day political work in the trade unions. He also went on record for the distribution of church lands, demanded more militancy of the party executive toward the government, and pleaded for a congressional vote of no-confidence in the incumbent leadership.[33] Caught by surprise, the beseiged executive were affronted and submitted their resignations to the congress. Because of the unavailability of an experienced alternative slate—but mainly because of the delegates' distrust of such reckless proposals—the resignations were not accepted.

The opposition was crushed soon after this abortive coup. Jenő László and László Rudas were dismissed from their positions with *Népszava*, and Szántó was subsequently fired from his post as a full-time labor organizer in an industrial district. A year later the demoralized opposition made an attempt to reorganize its ranks in the form of a Karl Marx Society.[34] The plan ran aground on Szabó's objections. He believed that although syndicalism was compatible with party membership, organized defection from the socialist ranks was not. Again, as many times in the future, the "myth of socialist

[32] In 1905 the party banned Szabó's published theses on the 1903 program and statutes. The editor of the party daily fired Béla Vágó for a series of articles criticizing the party executive for disallowing the election of nonproletarian Jenő László (the celebrated trial lawyer and defender of arresting strikers) as a chief steward of the Metal Workers' Union. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

[33] Since Vágó reiterated this criticism and his demand for the resignation of the executive during the next six party congresses without receiving more than a dozen votes, it may be surmised that he and his views were not taken very seriously by the socialist delegates. Manó Buchinger later recalled that when Vágó was ejected from the meeting hall for his unruly behavior he stood outside the window on a chair directing his few followers when to speak or otherwise interrupt the proceedings. Manó Buchinger, *Küzdelen a Szocializmusért: Emlékek és Élmények* [*Struggle for Socialism: Memoirs and Impressions*], Budapest: Népszava, 1947, p. 41.

[34] The would-be founders of the society included Artur Illés, Mária Krammer (Mrs. Béla Szántó), Jenő László, Richard Schwartz, György Nyisztor, László Rudas, Béla Szántó, and Lajos Tarczai. Szántó, "A Study . . . ," p. 140.

unity" prevailed, and organized opposition fell apart, not to be revived until November, 1918.

In 1909 Gyula Alpári, a young journalist who had been active in the German socialist movement, returned to Hungary and set out to reform the "decaying" socialist party. He established his own faction in a trade union and later captured control of the party's powerful Budapest Eighth-district organization. Unable to gain access to any socialist newspaper or journal in Hungary, Alpári decided to utilize his German contacts to apply pressure through the German party. As a contributor to Rosa Luxemburg's *Leipziger Volkszeitung* and Wilhelm Pieck's *Bremer Burgerzeitung*, he wrote a series of articles highly critical of the Hungarian party bureaucracy which were published in weekly instalments in Germany.

The Alpári affair lasted for years. Although the 1910 party congress, after acrimonious debate, consented to his expulsion from the party,[35] it took a special disciplinary court of the 1910 Copenhagen congress of the Second International to resolve the issue (Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin dissented from the majority decision).[36] Even so, Alpári's quixotic fight did not cease with his much-contested expulsion from the party. With the support of the radical Construction Workers' Union, he launched a weekly which called for an open schism in socialist ranks. Alpári's new party was to be one resting on a "network of democratically elected local organizations independent of the government and the trade unions, and . . . engaged in a merciless struggle with the ruling classes." [37] Shortly thereafter the union was obliged to comply with the national trade-union council's ultimatum and abandon the defeated rebel. Alpári retired from the movement, only to reemerge in February, 1919, as a prize convert to the Communist Party of Hungary.

Attempts by Szabó and his followers and Alpári to modernize socialist strategy and ideology were more than mere internal affairs of the party, isolated from the mainstream of contemporary Hungarian intellectual life. In fact, if there was an actual ideology of Hungarian socialism, it was hammered out by radical intellectuals, sociologists, and university students outside the workers' movement—the

[35]Although Alpári repeatedly denied the authorship of articles that the party executive had attributed to him, the motion for his expulsion was carried by a vote of 101 to 56. *Minutes of the Seventeenth Congress . . .* (1910), p. 139.

[36]Cf. Alpári's reminiscences on Lenin's steps in his behalf in *Inprekorr,* Dec. 13, 1932.

[37]Szántó, "A Study . . . ," p. 145.

"second reform generation"[38]—rather than by the socialist executive, which apparently was not sufficiently prepared to provide educational and ideological guidance.

The Second Reform Generation

After three decades of economic modernization, by the late 1800s a relatively small but politically and culturally conscious urban middle class made up of impoverished gentry, Hungarian and German craftsmen, and recent Jewish immigrants from Galicia had come into being.[39] Having obtained a degree of economic security, some of its more volatile representatives began to claim recognition for particular middle-class interests and attempted to translate them into political action. The outcome of the inevitable clash between the agrarian-dominated legislative establishment and the politically underrepresented urban interests was never in doubt. Despite public indignation and a hostile press, no legitimate parliamentary opposition was permitted to develop to channel away tensions fed by legitimate grievances, and restricted franchise and the open ballot continued to rule the political scene until the last days of the Monarchy.[40]

The turning point in the protracted struggle for political democratization came in 1900. It started as a spontaneous rebellion of radical intellectuals against the ultraconservative academia of the University of Budapest.[41] In the absence of a systematic statement of beliefs, the main tenets of the young rebels' credo was as follows:[42]

> It became increasingly evident that research in history and social sciences lost its integrity and was forced to operate under the aegis of the feudalistic government. . . . We lost faith in the church and religion as guidelines or possible sources of support. A corollary of this view was the belief that favorable changes could be expected only through the emancipation of the people, thus paving the road for a better, fuller, and more honest life. Therefore, we looked

38 In this context the "first reform generation" was that of Széchényi and Kossuth prior to 1848.

39 Macartney, *October Fifteenth . . .*, vol. 1, pp. 6ff.

40 For a useful analysis of the politics of these years see István Dolmányos, *A Magyar Parlamenti Ellenzék Történetéből*, 1901–1904 [*From the History of the Hungarian Parliamentary Opposition*], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1963.

41 The movement was spearheaded by Gyula Pikler, a controversial professor of legal philosophy at the School of Law, University of Budapest, and several of his friends and students, including Oszkár Jászi, Mihály Polányi, and Ervin Szabó.

42 Oszkár Jászi, "Egyetemi Évek [University Years]," *Uj Látóhatár* (Munich), nos. 1–2, 1957, pp. 68–69.

with genuine sympathy on the agrarian and industrial type of socialist movements. . . .

We also felt that the heritage of the great reform era of Kossuth and Széchényi . . . became completely falsified by their unworthy successors . . . and concluded that the historic classes [of Hungary] forfeited their exalted mission.

We drew a set of conclusions from these discoveries and sentiments. We began to suspect the so-called "national" or "historic culture," its uncritical adulation of the past and its approach to the contemporary clash of values which were represented solely from the viewpoint of the ruling class. We felt that without a more international, rational, and critical viewpoint and culture, [Hungary's] grave and increasingly menacing problems could not be solved. This is why we became interested in sociology and the [physical] sciences. First Herbert Spencer's philosophy occupied our attention, and later Durkheim's sociology—particularly its exclusion of individual introspection and insistence on objectivity. This is how the "scientific world view" became almost a propagandistic demand in opposition to religious dogmas and conservative historical scholarship.

At the same time the rebellion was going on within the walls of the academy Jászi enlisted the financial support of prosperous lawyers and industrialist friends to launch a monthly journal, *Huszadik Század* [*Twentieth Century*], which appropriately made its debut on Jan. 1, 1900. Jászi states that "From the very beginning, [he] felt the importance of emphasizing that the *Twentieth Century* was not merely a happenstance undertaking, but an expression of a new spiritual and moral synthesis."[43] A year later the journal's editors and charter subscribers founded the Society for Social Sciences to establish a forum for public debate on contemporary social, political, and economic problems and to popularize the ideas of reform.

These events had a nearly revolutionary effect on the long-dormant and sterile intellectual life of the country. A number of progressive historians, journalists, sociologists, and philosophers joined the society to engage in a long series of often heated arguments on every conceivable topic. Issues of contemporary socialism occupied a prominent place; the relative merits of Fabian socialism, syndicalism, anarchism, Austro-Marxism, Millerandism, and their applicability to Hungarian conditions were subjects of extended debates and generated widespread response from the growing ranks of the reform-oriented intelligentsia.[44]

[43] Oszkár Jászi, "Huszadik Század [The Twentieth Century]," *Uj Látóhatár* (Munich), no. 3, 1957, p. 136.

[44] Pál Sándor, "Az Uj Tudomány: A Magyar Polgári Szociológia [The New Science: Hungarian Bourgeois Sociology]," in Hegedűs, *Centuries . . .*, pp. 283–288.

In a few years *Twentieth Century* had become a significant political force. Its 3,000 subscribers, who were given automatic membership in the society, represented a highly prestigious segment of Hungary's academic, industrial, and commercial elites. Under Jászi's skillful stewardship the journal became an influential vehicle of political modernization, social reform, and the unification of Hungarian progressive middle-class elements.

Public discussions on scientific socialism had three remarkable features: (1) they took place wholly outside the workers' movement; (2) chronologically, they preceded the passage of the party program of 1903 and the publication of *Szocializmus*, the party's theoretical monthly in 1907; and (3) they served as ideological training schools for the future socialist opposition under Szabó's leadership.[45]

Radical middle-class reformers, however, were far from united behind the cause of socialism. In rapid succession the majority of the society's membership enthusiastically subscribed to a variety of eclectic philosophies—first Herbert Spencer and Comte, then Oswald Spengler, Nietzsche, Marx, Bernstein, and Sorel. Although Jászi and his friends were not exempt from these annual changes from one fashionable foreign philosophy to another, they remained firmly committed to their own brand of socialism. Jászi, in his first book written in exile, gave this explanation of the philosophy of his youth:[46]

> Although we were socialists, we soon recognized the shortcomings and errors of the Marxist orthodoxy. Our views, as opposed to those of the social democracy . . . affirmed the decisive role of intellectual work in the society and saw the basic issue of capitalism in the land problem. . . . We also emphasized the role of free cooperation and disapproved of class struggle when preached as a dogma.

While Jászi borrowed liberally from the syndicalist vocabulary in opposing "rule, dogma, authority, and centralization," his brand of "middle-class socialism" never endorsed violence or revolutionary means to carry out the essentially revolutionary implications of the ideology of the *Twentieth Century* group. Their sound political instincts were not deceived by Marxist verbiage on the indivisibility of the land and the necessity for its socialization as a whole, but they

[45] Szabó was associate editor of the *Twentieth Century* and vice-president of the society.

[46] Oszkár Jászi, *Magyar Kálvária–Magyar Feltámadás* [*Hungarian Calvary–Hungarian Resurrection*], Vienna: Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1920, p. 30.

argued boldly for an immediate land reform to benefit the landless peasantry. Nor were they convinced of the leading role of the proletariat in a coming revolution, but they designated themselves, "the intellectual proletariat," as the vanguard of the working classes. This latter view was well expressed in a letter from Jászi to Szabó on the role of the intellectuals in a future revolution: "We intellectuals must work to transform that which lives half-consciously in the masses into an integral world view, and to undermine the existing society with weapons of morality, science, and the arts."[47]

The society's gradual shift toward the left and its increasing preoccupation with problems of socialism alienated many of its original supporters, who finally left the group. The "moderates" formed their own association (which eventually deteriorated into a dining society featuring moderately progressive after-dinner speeches). The defection of these Christian middle-class elements from the radical group unwittingly helped to bring Jászi and his sociologist colleagues closer to the workers' movement.

Having freed itself of the moderates, the society decided to build up a mass following from the ranks of the proletariat. Consequently, it put into practice its thus far preached but not realized slogan, "the precondition of socialism is the existence of an educated working class," and in the fall of 1906 launched its Free School of Social Sciences. With this step the radicals had joined their cause with that of the organized workers' movement. The school was for many years the only institution devoted solely to the education of manual workers. It was not an amateurish enterprise of a few starry-eyed reformers, but was staffed by university professors, scientists, and well-known authors, who volunteered to give lectures once or twice a week to different classes of some 3,000 workers.

The socialist leadership[48] had been unable to carry out its obliga-

[47]Quoted in György Fukász, *A Magyarországi Polgári Radikalizmus Történetéhez, 1900–1918: Jászi Oszkár Ideológiájának Birálata* [*The History of Bourgeois Radicalism in Hungary: A Critique of Oszkár Jászi's Ideology*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1960, pp. 240–241.

[48]Jenő Landler, who in the spring of 1919 was the first important socialist trade-union leader to join Béla Kun's movement, argued this very point at the socialist party congress in 1912: "We [in the party] certainly have sufficient intellectual resources at our disposal . . . except, when comrades Garami, Kunfi, and Weltner and their like are supposed to deliver a lecture, they do not do it but 'subcontract these talks to others. . . . This is why our educational work is done for us by . . . the Society for Social Sciences and its affiliate, the Galileo Circle." *Minutes of the Nineteenth Congress . . .* (1912), p. 168.

tion to educate the working class; thus, by default, the bourgeois radicals performed this task for them. As a result, an entire generation of politically conscious workers, the future "noncommissioned officers of the revolutions of 1918–1919," received their socialist education from radical intellectuals, many of whom were charter members or early supporters of the Communist Party and found themselves on the "general staff" of the Soviet Republic of 1919.

Jászi's search for allies did not end with the foundation of the Free School. In order to enlist support from hitherto untapped sources, he and the entire *Twentieth Century* group joined the radical *Demokrácia* freemason lodge *en masse*. After a brief but evidently persuasive campaign within the lodge, Jászi secured from it an annual subsidy for the society's various educational programs.[49]

Next to the Free School for Social Sciences, the most significant enterprise of the radical intellectuals was the creation of the Galileo Circle at the University of Budapest in 1908.

The first socialist student club was organized by Ervin Szabó in 1902. Although socialist students were greatly outnumbered at the university, they made their often incoherent views heard at various meetings of international youth organizations, identifying themselves as Revolutionary Socialist Students of Budapest.[50]

The Freethinkers' League—a freemason auxiliary—offered some of the former socialist student leaders money, meeting halls, and printing facilities to resuscitate a radical student organization. After considerable hesitation and protracted bargaining, the Galileo Circle was launched in the fall of 1908, with a charter membership of 256.

Some of the leading propositions of the Galileo Circle can be summarized from its early programmatic statements. As an organization representing student interests, it demanded the introduction of comprehensive student welfare measures, a revision of the antiquated social science curriculum, and the eradication from the uni-

[49] Members of the lodge included middle-class radicals and socialist intellectuals alike: Zsigmond Kunfi, editor of the socialist theoretical monthly *Szocializmus*, and Jenő Varga, József Pogány, Zoltán Rónai, and Ernő Czóbel, staff members of *Népszava*. These men and others, many of whom belonged to the party opposition, succeeded in winning over several of Hungary's seventy-two Freemason lodges to the cause of social reform during the following years. Cf. Márta Tömöri, *Uj Vizeken Járok. A Galilei Kör Története* [*A History of the Galileo Circle*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1960, pp. 46–47.

[50] Charter members were Jenő László, Béla Vágó, László Rudas, György Lukács, Elek Bolgár, and others. *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

versities of clerical influences. Politically, the group was committed to active participation in public affairs. According to its inaugural manifesto:[51]

> The Galileo Circle is established with the purpose of becoming the home of free scholarship and free thought at the university. . . . Fully aware of the historic mission of the intellectuals, the Circle resolves to unify and strengthen the intellectual resources of Hungarian students . . . thus enabling them to become one day resolute, well equipped, and conscious fighters for the social emancipation of Hungary. . . .
>
> The future intelligentsia refuses to be dependent upon the ruling classes . . . for its place is with the working class, whose interests they must serve. . . .

Solemn statements of principles were subsequently translated into a series of ad hoc campaigns and long-term programs. There were some vigorously fought though short-lived anticlerical and anti-militarist campaigns, but the Galileo Circle's most permanent contribution to social reforms was its two education programs. The first, designed for university students and the radical intelligentsia of Budapest, consisted of a program of public lectures and seminars on issues of contemporary philosophy, esthetics, history, economics, sociology, and international relations. The lecturers included well-known university professors, outstanding writers, scientists, and such distinguished guest speakers as Max Adler, Roberto Michels, Iwan Bloch, and Eduard Bernstein. These seminars rescued the radical and socialist students from the danger of intellectual parochialism and, by infusing a new sense of sophistication into the ensuing debates, enabled the radical intelligentsia of Budapest to consider Hungary's problems in the perspective of European social reform.

In addition to the immediate advantage of systematic exposure to a variety of ideas, the seminars also provided training for members of the circle who served as lecturers themselves at one of the several jointly sponsored Galileo–trade-union adult-education programs.[52]

Valuable as the Galileo Circle's reform campaigns and diversified education programs were, these achievements must be viewed as a hopeful but isolated affair of a few hundred radical students. The "camp of progress" remained extremely small until the end of World War I.

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 44.

[52] This project was designed to provide manual workers with a basic education and also served as preparatory schools for advanced programs offered by the Free School for Social Sciences.

Conclusions

Prewar social and political reformers had much in common. Of middle-class background and concentrated in Budapest and major cities, they constituted, in effect, an overgrown coffee-house debating society united by ties of personal friendship and a commitment to the cause of reform and divided by temperament, personal animosities, and profound philosophical disagreements on nearly everything except their opposition to the Hungarian status quo.

The main result of discussions among radicals, and between radicals and the official socialist leadership, was the introduction of Marxism and revisionist socialism into the country's intellectual life as a legitimate and desirable alternative to the archaic authoritarian values that constituted the ideology of the Hungarian political establishment.

The strength of scientific socialism, aside from its novelty and revolutionary implications, lay in the intellectual superiority of its individual protagonists to the dull and uninspired performance of the regime apologists. The quality of talent committed to the sociopolitical status quo in Hungary was probably the most telling indication of the impending ideological bankruptcy of the old regime and of the coming of a new generation, untarnished by the sins of the discredited establishment and ready to formulate its earnest, though sometimes incoherent, ideas into a "new political synthesis."

In a different sense, the issue of ideological dynamism is equally applicable in comparing socialist leadership with that of the bourgeois radical (Freemason–Freethinker–Galileo Circle) and socialist (syndicalist and left-wing) opposition. The Hungarian Social Democratic Party was unable to democratize its style of leadership, to successfully represent working-class interests to the government, to devise and implement flexible strategy and tactics, to provide adequately for the political education of its members, and to gain the support of the peasantry, the nationalities, and the urban middle classes for the goals of socialism. The party leaders, Ernő Garami, Sándor Garbai, Zsigmond Kunfi, and others, labored honestly and unceasingly to realize working-class objectives and still maintain the party's organizational and ideological integrity. Clearly, it would have been unreasonable to expect the trade-union leaders and self-educated factory stewards of the party executive to become independent Marxist thinkers overnight, to reject the teachings of the

revered Bebel and Kautsky, and to lead a refurbished socialist party to victorious strikes, and thence to parliament or to revolution—whichever started first.

In a larger sense, however, the lack of communication between the radicals and the party executive resulted directly from the dilemma presented by two sets of imported foreign socialist ideologies: German orthodox Marxism or a combination of French syndicalism with an eclectic package of undigested fashionable philosophies of the day were, in essence, the options offered by each side as the sole plan of deliverance for the Hungarian working classes. Possibly a combination of the German organizational pattern, syndicalist dynamism, and the radical propensity for educational work could have created a workers' party strong enough to engage in a political and economic struggle with the authoritarian government with some hope of success. However, each side (with perhaps the exception of the open-minded Jászi) insisted on the exclusive validity of its views and presented its arguments in a fairly dogmatic fashion, the lines of disagreement gradually hardened, and both approaches deteriorated into nearly equally unrealistic and inapplicable sets of ideas which bore increasingly less relevance to the real problems of a Hungary that was still semiagricultural.

Socialist disunity was symptomatic of the time, and no party of the Second International was exempt from this disturbing phenomenon. While conditions elsewhere may have contained elements of peaceful resolution of differences, compromise remained impossible in Hungary short of a major realignment of the internal balance of power which would permit both the socialists and the radicals to translate their programs into political action. This opportunity did not present itself until the collapse of the Hapsburg Monarchy in the fall of 1918.

Chapter 2

HUNGARIAN SOCIALISTS DURING WORLD WAR I

Following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in the summer of 1914. The news of war prompted wild demonstrations and a flood of patriotic oratory on the streets and in the newspapers of Hungary. Carried away by the sound of military music and the sight of glittering Hussar divisions, the people of Hungary looked forward to a short war and to the restoration of national honor by the conquest of Serbia.

The Hungarian Social Democratic Party, as a matter of basic philosophy, did not believe in military means to achieve political ends. The first *Népszava* editorial on the Sarajevo murder pointed an accusing finger at the dual monarchy's imperialistic Balkan policies as the primary cause of the Serbian tragedy.[1] However, after a month-long struggle against the rising tide of war hysteria, the socialists—fearful of seizure of the party press and the disbanding of workers' organizations by the military—finally acquiesced. Faced with a war message calling for "national unity regardless of class differences," the party complied, at first reluctantly and then with increasing willingness. There can be no doubt that by the fall of 1914 the party executive and the industrial proletariat, like the rest of the country, supported the Emperor's declaration of war and, had it been permitted to do so, would have voted in favor of measures contributing to the war effort.[2]

Other socialist parties, in or out of parliament (with the much overstated exception of the Bolshevik duma faction) acted in the

[1] "The Sarajevo assassination was caused by Austro-Hungarian imperialism. Imperialistic policies that had begun with the occupation of Bosnia were the prelude to this most recent, but certainly not last, incident that involved the murder of Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne. . . . The Crown Prince was the foremost representative of Austro-Hungarian imperialism, thus, in a sense, the assassin's bullet was aimed at imperialism itself." *Népszava,* June 28, 1914. Quoted in József Galántai, *Magyarország az Első Világháborúban,* 1914–1918 [*Hungary in the First World War*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1964, p. 127.

[2] Vilmos Böhm, *Két Forradalom Tüzében* [*In the Crossfire of Two Revolutions*], Vienna: Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1923, pp. 26–27.

same manner.[3] As always in the past, the German and Austrian parties set the precedent for the Hungarian socialists. In this case there was the additional bond of an alliance in the same military endeavor.

The war brought full employment to Hungary's industry and commerce. Skilled workers were at a premium in the defense-supply establishments and were exempted from military service. In 1915 the army took over the management of all major and several minor industrial enterprises and mines, thus providing immunity from service to additional thousands of organized workers. Consequently, the leaders and most middle-echelon cadres of the party (with some exceptions to be discussed later) remained at their posts throughout the war.

Enthusiastic manifestations of patriotic prowar sentiments gradually diminished as the war continued and began to take its toll in the hinterland. Inflation and frozen wages, the loss of many breadwinners to the army, inadequate rationed nourishment, and above all, the tremendous losses sustained in dead and captured at the eastern front in 1915–1916 were only the first difficulties that the monarchy was to encounter in a prolonged war.[4] The next two years witnessed grave fuel and textile shortages and harvests that yielded only half the prewar crop. Overcrowding and lack of new construction made for appalling housing conditions in Budapest. Conditions in the industrial districts were said to have been matched only by the squalor of Moscow during the Russian civil war. The influx of some 200,000 refugees from Galicia and later from Transylvania added considerably to the chaos in the capital.

Hungary's two million lower-middle-class and lower-class population in the cities, subjected to the deprivations of war, were also exposed to the emergence of a new caste of military suppliers, local and high-level influence peddlers, and corrupt bureaucrats who, in striking contrast to the urban proletariat and salaried employees, lived in ostentatious luxury off the profits of the war. Contemporary observers were unanimous in characterizing the socioeconomic conditions of Hungarian urban centers, and particularly that of Budapest, as "the coexistence of historically unparalleled poverty and

[3] Merle Fainsod, *International Socialism and the World War,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935, pp. 7ff.

[4] Galántai, *Hungary in the . . .* , pp. 213–217.

splendor," marked by the "desperation of the poor" and a philosophy of *après moi le déluge* of the *nouveau riche*.[5]

Throughout the war the ruling coalition of parties consistently refused to liberalize the franchise laws, allow salary adjustments for government employees, or grant requests for increased pensions for war widows and orphans. Perhaps to "balance" this, the same coalition granted liberal tax concessions to a vast number of war entrepreneurs of dubious character, doubled its subsidies to progovernment newspapers, and reinforced the rural police (gendarmerie) to cope with the expected internal unrest.[6]

Peace Efforts of the Socialist Radicals

In the spring of 1915 nearly all industrial enterprises were placed under military control, and the socialists were the first to voice dissatisfaction with the conduct of the war and the deprivations inflicted on the population. The party's more dynamic activists began to build an underground network of trade-union stewards to strengthen its illegal locals in order to lead and coordinate strikes, adjust socialist strategy and tactics to wartime conditions, and carry on peace propaganda in the army and among the population.[7]

Socialist peace propaganda to the armed forces was off to an inauspicious start when in May, 1915, the counterintelligence department of the Hungarian general staff intercepted several ship-

[5] For useful descriptions of Hungary during the war see Gusztáv Gratz, *A Bolsevizmus Magyarországon* [*Bolshevism in Hungary*], Budapest: Franklin, 1921; Sándor Juhász-Nagy. *A Magyar Októberi Forradalom Története* [*History of the Hungarian October Revolution*], Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1945; and Lajos Kassák, *A Károlyi Forradalom* [*The Károlyi Revolution*], vol. 7 of *Egy Ember Élete* [*A Man's Life*] (an autobiography), Budapest: Pantheon, n.d.

[6] Several additional examples of such conservative shortsightedness and ignorance are found in Emma Iványi (ed.), *Magyar Minisztertanácsi Jegyzőkönyvek az Első Világháború Korából, 1914–1918* [*Minutes of the Hungarian Council of Ministers during the First World War*], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1960.

[7] Cf. Böhm, *In the Crossfire* . . . , pp. 26–27; Béla Szántó, "Tanulmány az Első Világháború Elötti Magyarországi Ellenzéki Szociáldemokrata Irányzatokról [A Study on the Opposition Groups within the Hungarian Social Democratic Party before 1914]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 4, 1962, pp. 133–148; Jakab Weltner, *Forradalom, Bolsevizmus, Emigráció* [*Revolution, Bolshevism, and Emigration*], Budapest: Weltner, 1929; and Gyula Hevesi, "Az Első Világháború Alatti Munkásmozgalmak mint a Proletárforradalom Előfutárai [Workers' Strikes During the First World War as Forerunners of a Proletarian Revolution]," *Társadalmi Szemle*, nos. 3–4, 1949, pp. 214–233.

ments of pacifist leaflets directed to the front.[8] Some of the young radicals of *Népszava* had established contacts with Swiss and Entente socialists and sent a certain Mandel to the Zimmerwald socialist conference. They began to draft leaflets calling for peace "without territorial annexations from the defeated nations" and for the restoration of prewar Belgian boundaries.[9] According to a contemporary police report:[10]

Recently obtained reports indicate that the following announcement appeared in the "Club News" column of the May 11 [1916] issue of *Népszava:* "Free books for soldiers. The Workers' Education Circle informs soldiers and their families that the Circle will send pamphlets of the 'Library of Awakening' free of charge to soldiers on the front or in hospitals if their addresses are made known to us. Applicants for books should furnish their trade union membership cards or *Népszava* subscription receipts to join this program. . . .

The police report concluded:

Under these circumstances it can be expected that the smuggling of antiwar literature to soldiers will begin again—possibly in greater dimensions than in the past—therefore, measures are being taken for the closest surveillance of the case.

Another report attempts to link the *Népszava* action with a resolution of a "secret Anarchist congress held in the Netherlands" calling for the dissemination of antiwar literature among soldiers on the fronts.[11] The authorities were further incensed by the fact that all such book shipments were tied together with thin ribbons of the national colors and included several progovernment pamphlets selected for their ludicrousness. Shortly thereafter the police stepped in and the project came to an end.

[8] "Secret Order of the Minister of National Defense concerning the Prevention of Socialist Sabotage in the Armed Forces," B.I. 1-16734/eln. 1, 1915, IX, 14. This item is among "Documents Transmitted to the Hoover War Library from the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs under No. 1453/1932 M.E.," accessible at the Library of The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.

[9] "Confidential Circular from the Minister of National Defense concerning the Proceedings of the International Socialist Conference held in Zimmerwald Sept. 5–8, 1915," B.I. 1-16180/eln. 1, 1915, IX, 5.

[10] "Letter from the Commissioner of Budapest Police to the Minister of Internal Affairs on the *Népszava's* Planned Clandestine Pacifist Propaganda Action, May 23, 1916," B.I. 1-2375/res. 1012 HFB, 1916.

[11] "Report of Deputy Chief Inspector of Police Hetényi concerning Antimilitarist Propaganda in the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, May 15, 1916," B.I. 1-2375/1916, B.M.

In view of the obvious dangers and evident lack of success of these tacitly encouraged clandestine activities, the party executive decided to abandon such methods and to ally the party with Count Mihály Károlyi's parliamentary opposition and Oszkár Jászi's extra-parliamentary Radical Bourgeois Party. These three groups formed the core of the Intraparty Bloc for Electoral Reform in June, 1917.[12] The program of this coalition included the liberalization of the franchise, demands of peace without annexation and indemnification, democratization of the army, and a new nationality policy. This was to be accomplished within the framework of the Monarchy.[13] Since opposition platforms of this type were worth only as much as the number of mobilizable workers supporting them in the form of strikes or mass demonstrations, these demands were, in effect, little more than well-intentioned declarations of beliefs and brought no tangible results during the war.

Individual initiative in searching for ways out of the war was not lacking, however. For example, Jászi and several Budapest radicals joined a world peace movement and made strenuous efforts to enlist members of the parliament and business and religious leaders to their cause.[14] Jakab Weltner, Manó Buchinger, and four other leading members of the party executive worked for similar goals as participants in an international socialist conference in Sweden in the summer of 1917.[15] Hoping to persuade the belligerent powers to moderate their war aims, another socialist leader, Zsigmond Kunfi, formed a Peace Committee of Freemasons and established contacts with several Western European and Swiss grand lodges.[16] Every one of these attempts failed, but the militarization of public life and press censorship were not the only reasons for the failure. Jászi's and Károlyi's popular following consisted of a small circle of personal friends. They had little in common with the socialists in the party,

[12] There were three other parties in the bloc: the Christian Socialist Party, the Independence Party, and the Democratic Party.

[13] Cf. Mihály Károlyi's speeches as reported in *Az Est* (a liberal afternoon paper in Budapest) on Jan. 27, July 1, and Sept. 18, 1917. For a good description of the bloc's program and activities see Galántai, *Hungary in the . . .*, pp. 257–262.

[14] "Confidential Circular from the Imperial and Royal Austrian Ministry of Internal Affairs on the World Peace Movement, Aug. 27, 1916," 736 L/H.F.B., 1916.

[15] Manó Buchinger, *Küzdelem a Szocializmusért: Emlékek és Élmények* [*Struggle for Socialism: Memoirs and Impressions*], Budapest: *Népszava,* 1947, p. 238.

[16] Márta Tömöri, *Uj Vizeken Járok. A Galilei Kör Története* [*A History of the Galileo Circle*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1960, p. 98.

who had become accustomed over the years to defeat and dared not rally the organized workers for fear that the government, under the guise of martial law, would destroy the party's organizations, seize its press, and arrest its leaders.

The Engineer Socialists

Nineteen-seventeen was the fourth war year for Hungary. The government was slowly losing control of the reins of power and found it increasingly difficult to check the mounting popular dissatisfaction with its conduct of the war. Yet, the intra- and extra-parliamentary opposition was unable to take advantage of the government's weaknesses to reassert its overdue claims and reap the benefits in the form of thoroughgoing social and political reforms.

At the beginning of the war young trade-union activists launched a more or less coordinated program, hoping to enable socialists to cope with the challenges of the war period. With the executive's retreat in face of police repression, however, some of the more aggressive trade-union activists and a considerable number of young intellectuals (Galileists, Freethinkers, and assorted syndicalists) became alienated not only from the apparently futile socialist methods, but from the party's ill-defined goals as well. They all considered the war morally wrong and economically harmful and believed that only an active and organized opposition to it could redeem the "guilt of the older generation" for its complicity in having brought it about.

The first major wartime opposition group appeared in early 1917. Since the Hungarian Social Democratic Party did not admit white-collar workers into any of the existing unions, a group of "mental workers" in industry—engineers, technicians, draftsmen, and administrators—decided to form a trade union of their own.[17] These men occupied an ambiguous position in society and in the labor movement. Engineers, technicians, and draftsmen in factories were recruited from the urban lower-middle class and from classes for whom these occupations were the most plausible avenue of eco-

[17] We shall not consider here the development and platforms of the various offsprings of the National Association of White Collar Workers in Industry and Transportation, but the following organizations—most of which were denied both government and party recognition as bona fide interest groups—indicate the extent of the mushrooming organizing activity of hitherto unattached urban elements: the National Association of Clerks and Commercial Employees, the National Association of Engineers, and the Foremen's Section, National Association of White Collar Workers in Industry and Transportation.

nomic advancement (other careers and positions, such as state bureaucracy, local administration, and the army were closed to Jews). However, the anti-intellectual trade unionists rejected them as "representatives of capital" in the factory. The first group formulated what later became its basic philosophy, "engineer socialism."

In his memoirs József Lengyel attempted to reconstruct the gist of Gyula Hevesi's "engineer or genius socialism" as consisting of[18]

> . . . a plan to bring about a revolution by concerted sabotage action of technicians and engineers who are destined to become the main actors in social transformations. Hevesi rejected Marx's theory of surplus value. According to him, the major share of surplus value originated from engineering and technical inventions. Exploited patent holders robbed of the benefits of their inventions were to be the real proletariat. . . . The workers were to be natural but only auxiliary allies in the battle of the "creative producers."

This is how Ármin Helfgott, who, with József Kelen and Hevesi later founded the National Association of Engineers, argued the revolutionary technocrats' case:[19]

> Although science and technology have developed tremendously, they did not contribute to the happiness of mankind; on the contrary, the "level of happiness" is lower than ever. Clearly, scientific progress in itself is not enough and is absolutely useless if the social order tends to counteract it. The source of evil is capitalism, which by now has become an anachronism. . . . The principles of modern natural sciences are in full harmony with the ideas of socialism.

In the spring of 1917 the leaders of various newly founded engineers' and employees' associations were joined by representatives of twenty major industrial plants and utilities of Budapest to form the Interfactory Committee. The avowed purpose of this illegal body was to coordinate strikes and work stoppages in order to obtain economic concessions from the employers and the municipality. A general strike of all Budapest factories led by key technical personnel was

[18] József Lengyel, *Visegrádi Utca* [*Visegrád Street*], 4th ed., Budapest: Gondolat, 1962, pp. 53–54. Hevesi's thesis was similar to the idealistic, politically incoherent, and ideologically eclectic views held by members of the Russian scientific intelligentsia who joined the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution. S. V. Utechin, "Bolsheviks and their Allies after 1917: The Ideological Pattern," *Soviet Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, October, 1958, p. 126.

[19] Gyula Hevesi, *Egy Mérnök a Forradalomban* [*An Engineer in the Revolution*], Budapest: Europa, 1959, p. 103. Speech before the meeting of the engineers' section, National Association of White Collar Workers in Industry and Transportation, on Dec. 30, 1917.

envisaged. The attempt failed after the party refused to support it.[20]

Undaunted, the engineers went on with their strike plans, though with an apparently improved strategy. Helfgott, Kelen, and the others began to infitrate some of the loosely controlled trade unions and succeeded in gaining control over several locals. Hevesi recalls in his memoirs: "At first we did not have the courage to give public speeches at trade union meetings . . . but later we were much in demand as people having the technological know-how and speaking the workers' language . . . unlike some of the [party] orators whose half-baked Marxism was their only propaganda tool."[21]

By the end of 1917 the socialist technical intelligentsia had made considerable inroads into trade-union locals in Budapest that had been solidly controlled by the party. Defectors from the party also included many syndicalist factory stewards, the socialist Freethinkers' circle, and a few junior members of the *Népszava* staff. As a result, the Interfactory Committee consolidated many opposition centers within the party and several previously unaffiliated persons into a powerful group committed to methods of "direct action" to bring about a general political strike.

Doctrinaire theses of "engineer socialism" and laboriously assembled quotations from Marx, Sorel, and Kropotkin by educated trade unionists were a far cry from an integrated philosophy on the eve of revolutionary action, and the Interfactory Committee was greatly handicapped by the lack of consistent declaration of immediate political goals. Socialist technocrats and syndicalist trade unionists might be satisfied with elaborate theoretical arguments, but masses of workers not versed in Marxism and inexperienced in conspiratorial techniques could not be mobilized and led into action without easily comprehensible slogans of popularly endorsed short-range goals.

Although the turbulent events of the October Revolution in Russia and the growing atmosphere of crisis had considerable effect on the views of the average worker, it was the emergence of a new,

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 95. However, Tibor Szamuely (Tibor Szamuely's nephew), argued that the Interfactory Committee in fact did not exist: "Neither in the rich [?] communist literature of memoirs nor in the social democratic literature do we find a single fact supporting this [Hevesi's claims]. . . ." Tibor G. Samueli, "Revolutsionnye Boi Vengerskogo Rabochego Klassa v 1917–1918 [Revolutionary Struggle of the Hungarian Working Class in 1917–1918]," *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriia,* no. 4, 1957, p. 178n. For Hevesi's indignant rejoinder see *An Engineer . . . ,* pp. 105–106.

[21] Hevesi, *An Engineer . . . ,* p. 91.

dynamic, revolutionary elite of socialist students and syndicalist shop stewards that transformed the activities of amorphous factions of opposition into concerted revolutionary action.

The Revolutionary Socialists

The new group that later called itself "revolutionary socialists" was formed in the fall of 1917 by members of a Marxist study group of the Galileo Circle.[22] According to József Lengyel, a member of the group, the epithet "social revolutionary" implied "the most radical revolutionary group in Russia at that time" (presumed to be the left social revolutionaries).[23] Galileo Circle students, long dissatisfied with the socialists' and radicals' methods in protesting the growing militarization of public life, approached Ervin Szabó (then the director of the Budapest Public Library) for guidance.

This step coincided with Ilona Duczynszka's return from Switzerland (A descendant of a Polish nobleman who had settled in Hungary after the Galician peasant riots of 1846, she was a family friend of the Jászis' and Szabós'.) She had brought with her a set of antiwar leaflets of the Zimmerwald socialists, which she had received from Angelica Balabanova, whom she had befriended during her university years in Zurich.[24] Szabó, evidently impressed by the Zimmerwald material, arranged for a meeting of the student group (leading memebrs were Tivadar Sugár, Árpád Haász, and Duczynszka) and a few of his syndicalist friends who had positions of influence in their respective unions.[25]

At the conference Duczynszka reported on the most recent (March 20, 1917) manifesto of the Zimmerwald International Socialist Committee. "The fact that there are socialists in other belligerent countries who are opposed to the war and to the official social democratic leaderships who support their governments' [war efforts]

[22]For an analysis of various ideological positions represented by the revolutionary socialist group see Tibor Szamuely, *A Magyar Kommunisták Pártjának Megalakulása és Harca a Proletárdiktaturáért* [*The Communist Party of Hungary: Its Formation and Struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1964, pp. 49–54.

[23]Lengyel, *Visegrád Street*, p. 40.

[24]Cf. Tömöri, *A History . . .*, pp. 105–114. Tömöri's account is based on Duczynszka's unpublished memoirs, which had been made available to her in 1957.

[25]The syndicalists were Antal Mosolygó, chief shop steward, Mátyásföld Aircraft Works; Sándor Ösztreicher, chief shop steward, Csepel Manfréd Weiss Works (employing over 30,000 workers); and six shop stewards from the Erzsébetfalva and Csepel Ammunition Works, *Ibid.*, p. 107.

deeply impressed all those who were present." Thereupon Antal Mosolygó and the Galileists drafted a leaflet "that included the basic ideas of the Zimmerwald manifesto," and signed it on behalf of the "Zimmerwald-affiliated Hungarian Socialist Group."[26] The leaflet, which was distributed by syndicalist locals around the middle of November, 1917, read as follows:[27]

> Workers! Brothers! In spite of all peace manifestos, peace conferences, and peace resolutions, we are about to enter another horrible winter of war .... Governments and diplomats who represent the ruling classes cannot bring peace to the people ... because of their imperialist designs.... Shall we tolerate this because the German Emperor, the General Staff, and the Chancellor still want to conquer other nations? Or the Anglo-American imperialists did not spill enough blood? ... Are we going to wait until we all perish, and just look on while our precious spiritual and economic assets are destroyed and the lives of our brothers are put to an end by machines which we made? ... We cannot wait any longer.... We cannot have another winter of trench warfare....
>
> Only one force can redeem the world and vanquish the well organized forces of international reaction, and that is the united revolutionary peace movement of the international proletariat. . . . Let us have war on war! That was the slogan of the Petrograd and the Moscow proletariat who now call on us in the name of peace....
>
> Brothers, it is our turn now! We must understand that war aims and peace conditions are no concern of the proletariat. If we fight we shall liberate the world of one common enemy.... Its weapon is an intensified economic struggle which through general strikes and sabotage in military industries should make waging war more difficult, and impossible at the end. Comrades, be prepared! Workers and soldiers of the world unite!

This leaflet was the first truly revolutionary document that appeared in Hungary during the war. The grievances described were real enough and lent a great deal of plausibility to its condemnation of imperialist governments, bloodthirsty generals, and insincere overtures against the continuation of the war. Moreover, the association of the successful Russian Revolution with the idea of peace was also an extremely persuasive argument. It not only pointed to a tangible end result, but indicated the simplest way of achieving it.

After the publication of the first peace leaflet, the Galileo Circle radicals became divided into two groups: those who were willing to participate in clandestine antiwar propaganda work and those who did not commit themselves beyond organizing and leading public discussion groups concerning various economic problems of a post-

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 107–108.
[27] For the complete text see *ibid.*, pp. 253–254.

war world. In the meantime others also joined the underground Galileo-syndicalist enterprise. The most important newcomers were Ottó Korvin (József Kelen's brother) and his anarchist group (Imre Sallai, János Lékai, and József Révai) and several engineers from the Interfactory Committee.

The technical know-how was contributed by a Russian social revolutionary political emigrant, Vladimir Bogdanovich Justus, who had been living in Budapest since his escape from Russia in 1912.[28] Although recently published Hungarian communist literature has tended to endow Justus with superhuman revolutionary wisdom in aiding these activities, it is reasonable to assume that he and some Russian Bolsheviks working as prisoners of war in various printing plants in Budapest introduced Duczynszka, Korvin, and others to Russian socialist conspiratorial techniques of underground communication, the hiding and distribution of propaganda material, and makeshift printing methods.

The appearance of the second leaflet, entitled "Not a Penny, Not a Man for the Army!,"[29] coincided with a mass demonstration led by the Interfactory Committee to protest the latest war-bond drive and greet the "victorious Russian Revolution." It was a precedent-setting occasion in two respects: for the first time social democracy and the unpopular government were identified as equally unwilling to bring about peace, and for the first time "ideas of Bolshevism" were declared to be the only alternative to radical and socialist procrastination.

Prompted by the widely publicized Russian Peace Decree, the next revolutionary socialist leaflet called for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the commencement of peace negotiations

[28] V. Urashov, "Az Orosz Forradalmárok Segitenek [Aid from the Russian Revolutionaries]," in Borbála Szerémi (ed.), *Nagy Idők Tanui Emlékeznek* [*Heroic Times Remembered*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, pp. 35–37. The writer claims that he and Justus, "under instructions from Russian exiles in Switzerland," established several Bolshevik cells among the 500 Russian prisoners of war working in Budapest in the years of 1916–1918. For a more recent and somewhat better documented case for Bolshevik assistance in building revolutionary cells among Russian prisoners of war in Hungary see I. P. Iakushkina, "Rabota Bol'shevikov sredi Russkikh Voennoplennykh v Germanii i Austro-Vengrii, 1914–1918 [Bolshevik (Agitation and Propaganda) Work among Russian Prisoners of War in Germany and Austria-Hungary]," *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, no. 3, 1963, pp. 58ff.

[29] In Mrs. Sándor Gábor *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 5, Nov. 7, 1917–March 21, 1919, Budapest: Szikra, 1956, p. 41.

"on the basis of national self-determination, so as to eliminate all tendencies which may trigger yet another war." The text ended with this question: "After the war they will ask you not whether you fought at the front, but 'what have you done for the peace?' What will be your answer?"[30]

To many young socialist students and syndicalist leaders affiliated or sympathizing with the revolutionary socialists, the answer lay in the awakening and mobilization of the insufficiently utilized revolutionary potential of the proletariat through the organizational device of workers' councils.

The Workers' Councils

The choice of workers' councils as the vehicle of revolutionary deliverance, rather than revitalization of the existing trade unions, was much more than a matter of the most expedient form of organization. It concerns the very essence of revolutionary socialist ideology. Communist historians invariably point to the influence of the Russian workers' soviets, implying that both their form and operative content were adopted *in toto* by the Hungarians.[31] Socialist memoir literature, on the other hand, maintained that the idea of workers' councils was a "general European phenomenon as old as the Paris Commune."[32]

Undoubtedly the Russian experience contributed appreciably to the political views of the European working classes. The organizational arrangements of the Paris Commune and those of the more recently formed Berlin Revolutionary Shop Stewards were widely known among the workers with only a rudimentary knowledge of Marxism. Facts indicate, however, that Russian events as they became known in Hungary through contemporary newspaper reports[33] were perceived by the revolutionary socialists in terms entirely differ-

[30] "We want Permanent Peace!" in Tömöri, *A History . . .*, pp. 254–255. See also "Novye Dokumenty o Vliianii Oktiabr'skoi Revolutsii na Strany Zapada [New Documents on the Influence of the October Revolution on the Countries of the West]," *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriia*, no. 4, 1957, pp. 233–234.

[31] Tibor Hajdu, *Tanácsok Magyarországon*, 1918–1919 [*Local Soviets in Hungary*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1958.

[32] Cf. Jakab Weltner's testimony at the Hamburger trial in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, p. 236.

[33] Sources consulted were *Népszava* (socialist), *Az Est* (liberal), *Pesti Hirlap* (conservative-independent), issues for November–December, 1917.

ent from those of the contemporary Russian Bolshevik pattern.[34] For these young radicals the Russian Revolution was a glorious example of direct action carried out by an active minority under anarcho-syndicalist slogans of antimilitarism, individual freedom, and the elimination of the authoritarian state.[35] Emotionally charged newspaper accounts depicting violence, bloodshed, and the terror of the armed proletariat well fitted their preconceived ideas of a revolution,[36] and they saw the Russian workers' and soldiers' soviets as familiar syndicalist instruments of a social revolution, later to be discarded and replaced by the free associations of producers, which would then constitute the state.

A year later Révai gave this illuminating comparative analysis of syndicalism and Bolshevism:[37]

> Syndicalism has been a revolutionary and antiparliamentary movement in opposition to the parliamentary cretenism of the social democracy. Although syndicalism has provided us with a masterful analysis of the institutions of the bourgeois society, it failed to observe the inner relationships of the *part* and

[34] It was not the first time that Hungarian socialists had misinterpreted the nature and the meaning of revolutionary events in Russia. In the years of 1905 to 1907, for example, Ervin Szabó and the *Népszava* commentators were unanimous in appraising the Russian turmoil as a series of "neo-Pugachov" peasant uprisings. Apparently they completely overlooked the role played by Russian Marxist groups at that time. Partly because of this somewhat oversimplified evaluation, and partly because of the Hungarian socialists' preoccupation with the cabinet crisis of 1906–1907 that preceded the periodic renegotiation of the size of Hungary's contribution to the Monarchy's defense budget, the fact remains that, with the exception of the customary harvester strikes, crises in Russia were ignored by the Hungarian left. Cf. József Révai, *Marxizmus, Népiesség, Magyarság* [*Marxism, Populism, Hungarianism*], Budapest: Szikra, 1949, pp. 52–53, and Tibor Erényi *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 3, 1900–1907, Budapest: Szikra, 1955, pp. 528–532.

[35] József Révai, an early revolutionary socialist, aptly characterized the group's philosophy: "The goal of life is action, and action is an end in itself." Quoted in György Bodnár, "Vázlatok Révai József Pályaképéhez [Sketches on József Révai's Career]," *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, no. 2, 1960, p. 142.

[36] It should be recalled that every revolutionary socialist leaflet or list of slogans to be submitted to mass meetings or shouted during demonstrations was prepared under the personal supervision of Ervin Szabó, whose syndicalist image of the Russian events remained unchanged throughout his lifetime.

[37] József Révai, in the introduction to Szabó, *The Struggle . . .*, p. 6. It is also worth noting that the terms "syndicalist" and "social revolutionary" were used interchangeably in every usually well informed military counterintelligence report at that time. Cf. "Report of the Chief of General Staff, Budapest Military District, on Social Revolutionary Activities in Hungary, April 1, 1918," B.I. no. 746 res.

the *whole*. . . . [The syndicalists] saw the dialectical contradictions of the workers' movement but regarded them as absolute and not as relative. Syndicalism has been a searching for a road rather than an ideology solidly grounded on Marxist methodological foundations. . . .

Lenin also discovered this revolutionary element in syndicalism, although the *revolutionary parliamentarianism* that Lenin represented was a much clearer and more comprehensive concept than was syndicalism. Lenin was a *social democrat* in the orthodox revolutionary sense of the word. The antagonism between syndicalism and revolutionary parliamentarianism was only theoretical, for it originated in Lenin's strict dialectically constructed philosophy of history; he regarded the workers' movement from this viewpoint, while the syndicalists did not have this philosophy of history. In reality their [Lenin's and the syndicalists'] actions have not differed from one another, since both have acted or wanted to act in a revolutionary manner. Although in their ideologies they did not have a common ground (actually they never clashed in any polemics), it was in their *actions* that they were destined to meet.

Two syndicalist chief factory stewards, Antal Mosolygó and SándorÖsztreicher, formed the first workers' councils in Hungary on Dec. 26, 1917.[38] At this point the Interfactory Committee, the Engineers' Association, and the representatives of municipal employees joined the action, which soon began to resemble a palace revolution designed to unseat the party's official authority. These groups were deeply impressed by the dynamism of Ervin Szabó's syndicalist strategy and by the evident success of the fast-growing network of clandestine workers' councils, particularly in defense plants. They decided to follow the revolutionary socialists' organizational initiative (workers' councils), and subsequently began to prepare for a nationwide political strike.

The political situation appeared to be ripe for concerted action. Since November, 1917, scattered strikes, work stoppages, and sabotage at munitions plants had been plaguing the economy, while food and fuel supplies had sunk to a new low. The mood of the country grew more menacing every day.

The leading plotters of the general strike held a session in early January, 1918, as the enlarged executive of the Interfactory Committee, with selected trade-union delegates, Mosolygó as spokesman for the syndicalists, and Zsigmond Kunfi speaking for the party executive. Kunfi, citing the need for "party unity and sober discipline," counseled the meeting against prematurely mobilizing the unprepared masses,[39] but his arguments were of no avail. The confer-

[38] Tömöri, *A History* . . . , p. 111.
[39] Hevesi, *An Engineer* . . . , p. 124.

ence resolved to act as soon as feasible and dispatched Hevesi to establish liaison with similarly disposed Austrian unions in Vienna. Hevesi's mission failed. However, a major, although apparently unrelated, strike did break out in Wiener Neustadt on January 13; within days this strike spread to Germany, and by January 18 it had also embroiled Hungary.

In the first days of January the Budapest police caught up with the increasingly daring revolutionary socialist antiwar propagandists and ordered the Galileo Circle closed on January 12.[40] Two days later the entire group—with the exception of Szabó, Mosolygó, and Korvin—was arrested and charged with sedition.

On January 14 Mosolygó called for a secret meeting of some of his syndicalist confidants and two or three Interfactory Committee leaders and submitted a draft resolution that he planned to introduce at six mass meetings of trade unionists, scheduled for the following day:[41]

> The workers of Budapest hereby resolve that socialist party politics, capable of utilizing every possible means of class struggle without fear or compromise, and suitable to the present difficult times, can be continued—or rather initiated—only if the workers assume the immediate and permanent control and direction of the Socialist Party. . . . The working class deems it vitally important that the party leadership be unburdened of the political and historic responsibilities currently incapacitating it, thus making possible the formulation of firmer and more far-sighted policies. For the purpose of practical implementation [of this resolution], a Workers' Council of Budapest should be formed immediately, in which every plant and craft would be represented by democratically elected delegates. This Council should be enlarged, with delegates elected by the counties. The party executive should be responsible for all its actions to the Workers' Council of Budapest and should proceed according to its general instructions. . . .

40 The emboldened Duczynszka and her colleagues had infiltrated several barracks of the Budapest garrison and distributed hundreds of leaflets, literally under the eyes of the military counterintelligence. The group was bound to be exposed sooner or later.

41 Tömöri, *A History . . .*, p. 255. Later Antal Mosolygó himself gave this clarification on the nature of his "workers' councils" proposition at the trial of revolutionary socialists who were arrested during the January strikes:

"*Prosecutor:* Why did you choose the term "workers' council," which is the name of a Russian revolutionary organization?

Mosolygó: Because there is an organization called Trade Union Council that represents the purely economic interests of the organized workers. We could not form a "counter-Trade Union Council," which would have implied a split [in the ranks of the workers' movement]; therefore, we wanted to form workers' councils. This was the consensus of the [syndicalist] shop stewards. . . ."

Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, p. 59.

According to the January 15 issue of *Népszava,* four of the six peace meetings immediately supported the resolution, while "tumultuous noise" prevented the other two gatherings from taking a clear stand on the proposal.

At this time two apparently unrelated items of news reached Budapest. The first was about the Wiener Neustadt work stoppage and the impending Austrian railroad strikes; the other was concerned with the German refusal to grant liberal peace terms to Russia. These events appeared to justify both the arguments of the revolutionary socialist peace propaganda and the syndicalist attack on the still inactive socialist executive.

In a few days the syndicalist agitation won its first major victory: on January 18, without authorization from the party, a general political strike broke out, led by the Railroad Workers' Union and the Metal Workers' Union.[42] On the first day of the strike, 150,000 workers demonstrated on the streets of Budapest shouting "Long live the workers' councils!" and "Greetings to Soviet Russia."[43] The enlarged socialist executive was called into session to appraise the situation. In view of the enthusiastic participation of all trade unions, and encouraged by the general strikes in Germany and in Prague (which began at the same time), the executive decided to sanction the strike, with the proviso that it should be terminated on January 21.[44]

More mass meetings and street demonstrations followed this declaration. The demands which emerged from these movements soon exceeded the "realistically enforceable legitimate grievances"—limitations which the party clearly spelled out in its original statement of endorsement. Slogans calling for an immediate separate armistice and for sabotage actions at electric power plants and railroad junctions gained wide currency, particularly among workers of munitions plants and railroad workshops. On January 21, pursuant to its resolution, the party executive claimed the victory, citing government assurances on higher wages, improved food supplies, and

[42] Franz Borkenau argued that it was the first major post-October political mass strike in Europe. See Franz Borkenau, *The Communist International,* London: Faber, Ltd., 1938, p. 91. For a more recent analysis of the January events see Irén Nevelő, "Néhány Adat az 1918 Januári Tömegsztrájk Történetéhez [Data on the History of the Mass Strike of January, 1918]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 2, 1958.

[43] "The Mass Strike, *Az Ujság* (Budapest), Jan. 22, 1918," in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . . ,* vol. 5, pp. 60–63.

[44] "Declaration of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party Executive to the Striking Workers, Jan. 19, 1918," in *ibid.,* pp. 64–65.

its "resolute desire for peace," and called on the workers to end the three-day strike.[45] Two major unions, the Metal Workers' Union and the Railroad Workers' Union, and the syndicalist-led Csepel defense plants refused to comply with the request.[46]

The party faced a major dilemma: should it fulfill its pledge to the government to end the strike and enforce union discipline on the dissidents, or should it join the extremists and risk a possible "palace revolution" if the syndicalist workers' council scheme gained the upper hand in the enlarged executive? After an around-the-clock session, the entire eleven-member executive committee announced its resignation and suspended all business until an extraordinary party congress could be convened in the near future to renew or deny its mandate.[47] As in the past, threats of mass resignation brought immediate results. Inbred fears of a split in the socialist ranks proved stronger than the lure of workers' control over the party bureaucracy. The striking unions and the Csepel syndicalists returned to work on the following day.

It was a costly victory both for the government and for the party executive. The government, which had never intended to deliver on its promises, soon had a series of crippling strikes on its hands and was forced to dip into the army's supplies to feed the starving Budapest workers. The breach within the party could not be healed, despite the overwhelming majority received by the incumbent leadership at the extraordinary congress on Feb. 10, 1918.

The dramatic confrontation between men such as Jenő Landler, Rezső Szaton, and János Matisán from the Railroad and Metal Workers' Unions, Béla Vágó and Jenő László from the Trade Union Council, Zsigmond Kunfi of the party executive and György Nyisztor, the socialist vice-president of the Association of Agrarian Laborers, left much bitterness. The dissatisfaction of these powerful union chiefs with the party executive did not erupt into an immediate open rebel-

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 69–70.

46 To a great extent, the growing radicalism of these two unions could be attributed to their spectacular numerical growth in the preceeding twelve months. During 1917 they had increased by 60,238 and 15,568 new members, or 291.1 and 291.06 per cent respectively. *Szakszervezeti Értesitő,* May, 1918; text in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .* , vol. 5, pp. 53–54. For a comprehensive account of trade union activities in 1917–1918 see Samu Jászai, *A Magyar Szakszervezetek Története* [*History of the Hungarian Trade Unions*], Budapest: A Magyar Szakszervezeti Tanács Kiadása, 1925, pp. 224–234.

47 "Statement of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party Executive Committee," *Népszava,* Jan. 22, 1918.

lion. It did, however, contribute greatly to the deterioration of the hitherto explicitly recognized authority of the traditional socialist hierarchy over the whole movement. With the January strikes the extremist left became a permanent fixture in the now polarized realm of socialist politics.

Toward a Final Breach in Socialist Ranks

With the arrest of the Galileo Circle group, Ottó Korvin and a group of young anarchist students and writers had taken over the revolutionary socialist organization. Communist historians credit Korvin with the introduction of "Russian conspiratorial techniques."[48] If successful evasion of the police dragnet for an additional three months and the issuing of reckless slogans are construed as imitation of Russian methods, then Korvin, Révai, Lengyel, Hevesi, and their syndicalist comrades still at large were indeed the first Bolsheviks in Budapest.

During the following months the revolutionary socialist–anarchists prepared and distributed seven leaflets, each prompted by some significant domestic or external event.[49] These leaflets were important contributions to the development of propaganda techniques of the extreme left. Their authors, as members of the Communist Party, later improved and applied these techniques with spectacular success.

One leaflet was issued after the January strike:[50]

> Hungarian workers! For three days you were objects of a cruel hoax perpetrated by men who call themselves your leaders. After three days they brought down the strike which was not of their making. They brought it down

[48] Especially József Révai, Béla Szántó, and Mátyás Rákosi, who sought to legitimize the origins of their extreme leftist positions during the Hungarian Soviet Republic: József Révai, "Foreword" to Szerémi, *Heroic Times . . .* , p. 9; Béla Szántó, "Emlékezés a Magyar Tanácsköztársaságra [Memories of the Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1959, p. 122; Institute for the History of the Hungarian Working Class Movement, *The Imprisonment and Defence of Mátyás Rákosi*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1954; and Mátyás Rákosi, "Sozdanie Kommunisticheskoi Partii Vengrii: Vengerskaia Sovetskaia Respublika, 1917–1919 [The Foundation of the Communist Party of Hungary: The Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 11, 1955, pp. 42–45.

[49] József Lengyel, then a member of the Korvin group, recalls in his recently republished reminiscences that the last sentence of every revolutionary socialist leaflet was taken from Peter Kropotkin's popular pamphlet "To the Youth." Lengyel, *Visegrád Street*, p. 41.

[50] "Workers! Brothers!" revolutionary socialist leaflet in late January, 1918, in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol, 5, pp. 73–74.

without obtaining results other than empty promises and a few words of praise from the police chief. And later "your leaders" had the audacity to call us Revolutionary Socialists, capitalist lackeys, and petty bourgeois class aliens. We shall not answer this slander in kind. . . .

Hungarian workers! The working class must realize its right of self-determination! Appoint . . . your stewards, form your workers' councils . . . and subordinate the party's present leadership to the will of the proletariat. . . .

Another message was distributed among the delegates of the February Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party:[51]

Our first task is the democratization of the party's organization according to the spirit of our times. . . . The party has lost touch with the masses and above all has lost its revolutionary character. Hungarian socialist leaders are socialists in name only; in fact, they are merely bourgeois democrats. . . . Do you really believe that the victory of proletarian ideals will ever be achieved through electoral law?

Workers! . . . Unseat the present leaders of our party . . . and through the workers' councils give purpose to our revolutionary might!

A leaflet issued in connection with the German procrastination at the Brest-Litovsk negotiations contained a series of vulgar invectives concerning the behavior of Austro-Hungarian and German diplomats. Members of the Hungarian cabinet were identified as "thieves, embezzlers, liars, and male prostitutes," while the bourgeois press, which generally gave credence to official war dispatches, was referred to as "a stinking compost pile."[52] The remarkable effectiveness of gutter language in arousing working-class support was further enhanced by the timeliness of the subject matter.

The reduction of complex issues to mouthfuls of curses became especially popular in the army. In an effort to stop this trend, General Szurmay, Minister of War, issued confidential orders prefaced as follows: "To my greatest regret, it has come to my attention that idle talk and gossip among the men—and unfortunately also among officers—of the army have, of late, begun to broach on subjects closely associated with the exalted personalities of His Majesty and His gracious Consort. Such conduct will not be tolerated henceforth. . . ."[53]

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

52 "We Must Act!" revolutionary socialist leaflet from the middle of February, 1918, in *ibid.*, p. 123.

53 "Confidential Letter from General Szurmay, Minister of War, to Division Commanders on the Prevention of Falsehoods in the Army, July 13, 1918," 161815/eln. no. 1, 1918.

Anarchist slogans designed to deprecate and destroy individuals, institutions, and symbols that were even remotely connected with the continued war or could be held responsible for social injustices were very much in tune with the popular disenchantment of the spring of 1918. Sailors' mutinies, rioting garrisons, and the growing number of deserters were forceful manifestations of the Monarchy's chaotic military situation.[54]

The last of the seven leaflets issued represented the culmination of revolutionary socialist efforts to capitalize on the socialists' internal difficulties and to accelerate the growth of grass-roots radicalism within. Because of distorted accounts of the Russian October Revolution in the Hungarian press, the Korvin group used the term "social revolutionary" and not "Bolshevik" to denote the "most radical" Russian revolutionary elite.[55]

> Hungarian workers! If you are tired of slavery, if you want peace and a better life: take the example of our Russian brothers, "Carry out the revolution of liberation!"
>
> The war will not end by itself!
>
> The party leadership does not want to act. It cannot . . . because the police controls it and because it is on the payroll of the bourgeoisie. Now the party argues for franchise . . . and not for revolution. Their road and ours have parted forever! . . .
>
> Let us take our slogans from the Russian Social Revolutionaries! We will not get anywhere with protest walks! Have you seen any results of the January mass strikes? No other socialist party of the world would ever accept that! What we need is *revolutionary struggle!* . . . Make this a *Red May Day!* There is nothing to fear! Our soldiers . . . will do as their Russian brothers did and will not turn their weapons against the people and the revolution!

With the arrest of fifty revolutionary socialists and syndicalists, the activities of the Korvin group came to an end in the second week

[54]Cf. "Reports from Regional Military Procuracies on Mutinies in the Army during May, 1918," in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, pp. 190–207; see also "Report of General Ferry, Commander, Military Police of the Hungarian Army" on the number of deserters captured by the military police and the rural gendarmerie:

1914	6,689	1917	81,605
1915	26,251	1–3/1918	44,611
1916	38,886	1918 (est.)	Over 150,000

In *ibid.*, pp. 207–209.

[55]"Awakening Workers!" revolutionary socialist leaflet issued for May 1, 1918, in App. 3 of "Report of Police Inspector Andréka to the Police Commissioner of Budapest on Illegal Political Activities of Syndicalist, Revolutionary Socialist, and Other Individuals under Surveillance," B.I. 1/1918.

of May. The "good conspirator" Korvin again escaped arrest, but every one else in the group (except József Révai, who apparently was considered not worth arresting) was placed in preventive detention, not to be released until the end of September. The forceful removal of the extremist wing from the scene left the party free to recapture several trade-union locals that had defected to the syndicalist camp.

The absence of the extremists was quite noticeable during the second major strike of the year, which took place from June 22 to 27.[56] The strike started in one of the Budapest railroad workshops. After the resident military commander refused to negotiate with a delegation of shop stewards over demands of wage increases, a crowd of workers gathered in front of the office and was greeted with bayonets and gunfire. Three men were killed outright. Within hours a general railroad strike was declared by Jenő Landler, whose initiative was immediately followed by the metal workers and the rest of the major unions. The party executive endorsed the strike on the next day. Mass demonstrations, newspaper articles, and parliamentary inquiries ensued. A party delegation was received by the Prime Minister, who promised an immediate investigation to establish the responsibility for the shooting. He also agreed to an increase in the prevailing wage scales in transportation and industry and urged the unions to resume their work.

Despite protests from László Rudas and Béla Szántó, the party called off the five-day-long strike without demanding the release of Landler, who had been arrested during the strike. With a resolution of "conditional approval," the majority socialist-controlled Budapest Workers' Council seconded the executive's decision and ordered the workers back to the factories. Although there were some minor economic concessions, working conditions remained unchanged, Landler and his friends remained in jail, and the officer who had ordered the shooting was not punished.

This defeat had significant consequences for the socialist movement. In retrospect, it tended to justify the antiexecutive arguments advanced by the Interfactory Committee and the revolutionary socialists during the previous two years. The party's retreat, in light of the seriousness of the provocation, alienated a considerable number of socialist activists in party and trade-union organizations. The party

[56] András Fehér, "A Magyarországi Munkásság 1918 Júniusi Sztrájkharcáról [On the Hungarian Workers' Strike of June, 1918]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1958.

was also unable to prevent the government from inducting into the army the factory and shop stewards who had been implicated in the strike. Although by this action the government unwittingly added two thousand embittered well-trained agitators to the already demoralized army reserve units, thus contributing to its own downfall, the general membership must have found it difficult to approve the party's abandonment of its "noncommissioned" officers.

The so-called "Galileo Circle trial" of Duczynszka and four of her accomplices, who had been arrested in January, was held on September 18 to 23, 1918.[57] The accused appeared unconcerned about the gravity of the charges. Instead of defending themselves, they spoke of the "traitorous" conduct of the party executive and contemptuously predicted the impending downfall of the monarchy. The surprisingly light sentences meted out by the court testified to the government's unwillingness to antagonize the workers and intellectuals of Budapest, who had strongly sympathized with the strong words and brave conduct of the Galileo Circle students. The publicity generated by the trial, however, was soon overshadowed by the momentous events of October, which were climaxed by the loss of the war and the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.[58]

In early October the socialist leadership, emboldened by the relaxed censorship of the press, issued a "Manifesto to the People of Hungary," the provisions of which later became the social reform program of the Károlyi government. The demands included new electoral laws based on universal franchise and the secret ballot, peace on the basis of Wilson's Fourteen Points, political equality of the nationalities, new legislation guaranteeing civil liberties, a comprehensive land reform, the socialization of major enterprises, just tax policies, and legislative measures to provide for war veterans and their widows and orphans.[59]

Even this program failed to bring reconciliation within the socialist movement. At the left, Korvin, Révai, and some of the released revolutionary socialists plotted against and actually attempted to assassinate former Prime Minister Tisza; in the left center, Jenő Landler, speaking for the railroad workers, refused to support what

[57]Jolán Kelen, *Galilei per a Huszadik Században* [*The Galileo Trial in the Twentieth Century*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1957.

[58]Probably the best account of the history of Hungary during the last months of the Monarchy is Sándor Juhász-Nagy, *A Magyar Októberi Forradalom Története* [*History of the Hungarian October Revolution*], Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1945.

[59]*Népszava*, Oct. 8, 1918.

he called the "reformist half-measures" of the executive committee unless it agreed to his proposed amendments to the outdated party program.[60] Theoretical disagreements and personal insults were by this time stronger than the common cause, and a forthright program of revolutionary action was now needed to rally the dissenters and bring about a formal split in the socialist ranks. This was not to happen until the return of the Hungarian Bolsheviks from Russia in November, 1918.

[60] On the assassination attempts see Hevesi, *An Engineer. . . .* p. 158. On Landler's remarks, see "Proceedings of the Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party of Oct. 13, 1918," *Népszava,* Oct. 15, 1918.

Chapter 3

HUNGARIAN BOLSHEVIKS IN RUSSIA

When Béla Kun and eight of his comrades, disguised as army surgeons returning from Russian captivity, arrived in Budapest on Nov. 16, 1918, few could have foreseen that four months later this small band of conspirators would be able to force the Hungarian Social Democratic Party into an alliance with the communists and launch the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

Socialist prisoner-of-war organizations in Russia had given rise to a new revolutionary elite, which later became known as "Hungarian Bolsheviks," "Hungarian Red Internationalists," or "graduates of the October Revolution." The role that foreign, and particularly Hungarian, prisoners played in events leading up to and following the October Revolution of 1917 indicated to Lenin, Bukharin, and the Soviet leadership the immediate military value and long-range revolutionary potential of foreign socialists. With Béla Kun's emergence in the Russian Communist Party hierarchy, the lessons of the October Revolution and the Russian civil war were to be utilized by the Hungarian communist group in preparing its strategy and tactics for a social revolution in Hungary.[1]

Prisoners of War in Russia

During the course of World War I, 3.6 million men (17 per cent of Hungary's total population of 21 million) were mobilized for military service. Of these, 661,000 died, 743,000 were wounded, and 734,000 were captured by the end of 1917.[2] Since Hungarian units were deployed mainly on the eastern front, nearly all prisoners of war were in Russian captivity. At the end of 1916 there were 2.5 million Austro-Hungarian, Bulgarian, Turkish, and German officers and men held in detention in 400 prisoner-of-war camps in Siberia,

[1] Since most of these challenging problems belong in the realm of the still incompletely explored history of the October Revolution and the Russian civil war, the discussion here is limited to documentable aspects of personalities and events.

[2] Mátyás Rákosi, "Sozdanie Kommunisticheskoi Partii Vengrii: Vengerskaia Sovetskaia Respublika, 1917–1919 [The Foundation of the Communist Party of Hungary: The Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 11, 1955, p. 41.

Central Asia, and European Russia.[3] By 1917 471,000 Austro-Hungarian prisoners had died from exposure, inadequate nourishment, work accidents, and disease.[4]

As was customary under conditions of war, captured enemy soldiers were put to work to supplement the manpower lost to the army. The utilization of this inexpensive labor force, however, was far more extensive in Russia than elsewhere. In fact, it is safe to assume that without the use of foreign labor the Russian war economy would have encountered serious difficulties as early as 1916.[5] As an integral part of the Russian labor force, prisoners of war were subjected to living conditions similar to or worse than those of the average Russian worker during the war. It can be assumed that in addition to physical deprivation and food shortages common experiences also included a sustained exposure to, and often active participation in, the sociopolitical upheavals that preceded both the February and the October Revolutions.

On the factory and workshop level, contacts between prisoners of war and Russian socialists (Mensheviks, social revolutionaries, anarchists, and Bolsheviks) were probably established as early as

[3] Benedek Baja *et al.*, (eds.), *Az Oroszországi Hadifogság és a Magyarok Hazaszállitásának Története* [*History of Captivity in Russia and the Hungarians' Return Home*], vol. 2 of *A Hadifogoly Magyarok Története* [*History of Hungarian Prisoners of War*], Budapest: Athenaum, 1931, p. 293; and N. A. Popov, "Revolutsionnye Vystuplenii Voennoplennykh v Rossii v Godakh Pervoi Mirovoi Voiny [Revolutionary Activities of Prisoners of War in Russia during the First World War]," *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 2, 1963, p. 76.

[4] Jenő Györkei and Antal Józsa, "Adalékok a Nagy Októberi Szocialista Forradalomban és a Szovjetúnió Polgárháborújában Részt Vett Magyar Internacionalisták Történetéhez [Data on the History of Hungarian Participants in the Great October Socialist Revolution and in the Russian Civil War]," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, nos. 3–4, 1957, p. 23; and L. I. Zharov and V. M. Ustinov, *Internatsional'nye Chasti Krasnoi Armii v Boiakh za Vlast' Sovetov v Gody Inostrannoi Voennoi Interventsii i Grazhdanskoi Voiny v SSSR* [*Internationalist Units of the Red Army in Battles for the Soviets in the Years of Foreign Military Intervention and Civil War in the USSR*], Moscow: Voennizdat, 1960, pp. 7–8.

[5] According to contemporary statistics cited by Soviet historians, by the middle of 1917 prisoners of war made up 33 to 50 per cent of the total work force in the Urals, about 27 per cent of workers in coal mines in the Donets Basin, and in Western Siberia more than 25 per cent of workers in steel mills and foundaries, and 60 per cent of the labor force in ore mines. In addition, about 500,000 prisoners of war worked in agriculture, lumber production, and railroad construction. A. Ia. Manushevich, "Iz Istorii Uchastiia Internasionalistov v Oktiabr'skom Vooruzhennom Vostannii [From the History of the Internationalists' Participation in the October Armed Uprising]," *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriia*, no. 6, 1962, p. 41; and Popov, "Revolutionary Activities . . . ," p. 87.

1915.[6] The spontaneous strikes of hungry and homesick soldiers that erupted in Turkestan and European Russia in 1916 under slogans of "Bread and Clothing!" "Down with the War!" and "We want to go home!" were the first harbingers of more than a dozen major and hundreds of local strikes and boycotts that were to plague the war-weary economy until the winter of 1917.[7] Factory cells of various Russian socialist groups welcomed these developments and often joined (or were joined by) the forced laborers in strikes for better wages and food bonuses.[8]

After the February Revolution, the Provisional Government permitted Czech, Slovak, and South Slav prisoners of war to leave the camps and to receive wages approximating those paid to Russian workers. Non-Slav Hungarians, Austrians, and Germans, however, were still compelled to work for minimum wages and to subsist on camp food. These measures antagonized many detainees into seeking out the most extreme elements among the Russian socialists—especially anarchists and Bolsheviks, but Mensheviks as well—and offering their cooperation for concerted strike plans.[9] Apparently, however, this coincidence of economic and political interests of foreign prisoners of war and Russian workers did not mature into a joint major strike or work stoppage until the October Revolution.

Prisoners of war lived in a dual world. As workers in factories or in the field, many considered themselves a much-needed part of Russian life. As soldiers in the camp, they played an entirely different role, as defined by the Monarchy's code of military conduct regulating relationships between officers and men. As a rule, officers were not allowed to perform physical labor outside the camp. Better food, guaranteed spending money, orderly service, preferential medical

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 77–79; and G. B. Shumenko (ed.), *Boevoe Sodruzhestvo Trudiashchikhsia Zarubezhnykh Stran s Narodami Sovetskoi Rossii*, 1917–1922 [*Military Solidarity of Foreign Workers with the Peoples of Soviet Russia*], Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1957, p. 7. For personal recollections of former Hungarian prisoners of war see Jenő Györkei and Antal Józsa (eds.), *Vengerskie Internatsionalisty v Velikoi Obtiabr'skoi Sotsialisticheskoi Revolutsii* [*Hungarian Internationalists in the Great Socialist October Revolution*], Moscow: Voennizdat, 1959. See also A. Shipek, "Voennoplennye i ikh Izpolzovanie v Mirovoi i Grazhdanskoi Voine [Utilization of Prisoners of War during the [First World] War and the Civil War]," *Voina i Revolutsiia*, no. 2, 1928; and I. Sneider, "Revolutsionnoe Dvizheniie Sredi Voennoplennykh v Rossii, 1915–1919 [Revolutionary Movements among Prisoners of War in Russia]," *Bor'ba Klassov*, no. 3, 1935.

[7] Popov, "Revolutionary Activities . . . ," pp. 79–81.

[8] Manushevich, "From the History . . . ," p. 41.

[9] Györkei, "Data on . . . ," p. 25.

care, a first selection from Swedish Red Cross packages, and segregated living quarters made the officers' lot superior to that of the enlisted men.

Few of the imprisoned Austro-Hungarian officers were professional soldiers. The majority belonged to the "one-year-volunteer" class of university graduates of Christian rural middle-class origin. The rest—gymnasia graduates, urban Jews, lawyers, students, and journalists—belonged to the "reservist" category. Within the camp reservist officers theoretically were entitled to the same courtesies and privileges as the professionals and the one-year volunteers. However, Jewish and non-Hungarian reservists of the Hungarian army were considered socially inferior by their fellow officers and thus were outcasts within their camps.[10] Similar treatment was accorded officers of working-class or peasant origin.

The enlisted men, with some significant exceptions, were "peasants in uniform" [to be exact, agrarian laborers and dwarfholders, since landowners with more than thirty yokes (1 yoke=0.57 hectare) were exempted from service], who all their lives had taken advice from the priest and orders from the village clerk and the landowner. A minority of them consisted of a diverse group of petty criminals released from detention to serve in the army, agrarian socialists, who were the first to be drafted from every village, trade unionists, anarchists, and certain strike organizers whom the locals or the socialist party considered as troublemakers, and hence expendable to the war effort.[11]

As the war wore on the mood of the camps became increasingly explosive. Enforced idleness of the officers and overwork of the enlisted men contributed to the growing tensions within each camp. Grievances, imaginary and real, of browbeaten and ostracized Jewish "second-class officers" in one compound and those of the often-harassed socialists in the other were bound to converge. The simultaneous appearance of a leadership representing a comprehensive action program and a new Russian political environment were all

[10] The issue of anti-Semitism, probably the most complicated social and psychological problem of pre-1914 Eastern Europe in general and of the Dual Monarchy in particular, was a major cause of the alienation and radicalism of Jewish professionals and intellectuals both in Hungary and in the prisoner-of-war camps. This matter will be discussed in some detail in Chapters 6 and 8.

[11] For example, Károly Vántus, a member of the *Népszava* editorial staff, was "sent to war by the party." Cf. Mrs. Károly Vántus, "A *Népszava* Szerkesztőségében (In the Editorial Offices of *Népszava*]," in Borbála Szerémi (ed.), *Nagy Idők Tanui Emlékeznek* [Heroic Times Remembered], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, pp. 82–86.

that were needed to transform and channel the smoldering dissent into a full-fledged class war in the prisoner-of-war camp. The emergence of revolutionary socialist prisoner-of-war centers in Siberia and European Russia and the February Revolution of 1917 fulfilled both these conditions.

Béla Kun in Siberia

Béla Kun, who was to become the revolutionary leader of Hungary, was born in the small Transylvanian village of Lele (population 750) in the Szilágycsehi district, Szilágy county, on Feb. 20, 1886. His father, a radical Kossuth-idolizing village clerk, was said to have "sided with the village poor" in their arguments with the manager of a large estate that surrounded the village. At one point these antagonisms ended in a brawl, and the elder Kun, on the basis of testimony of "false and paid" witnesses, received a short jail sentence. At the age of ten Béla Kun was sent to the famous Calvinist Kollégium (boarding school) to continue his education. Because of his inadequate academic background, the following summer Kun's parents hired an older boy to tutor him;[12] later, as a graduating senior, Kun won the school's annual prize of forty crowns for his essay on "The Patriotic Poetry of Sándor Petőfi and János Arany."[13]

In 1902, when he was sixteen, Kun joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.[14] In the fall of 1904 he enrolled in the Kolozsvár Law Academy, took a part-time job at the local Workers' Insurance Bureau, and began writing short essays for a small radical newspaper *ŐR* [*Guardian*]. The following year he left for Nagyvárad, where he joined another radical daily, *Szabadság* [*Liberty*], as a full-time reporter. Later in that year Kun persuaded his newspaper's publisher to launch a penny afternoon tabloid which he would edit, and with the publictaion of *Előre* [*Forward*] on Sept. 18, 1906, the twenty-year-old Kun became an editor-in-chief. *Előre* went bankrupt after

[12] The summer instructor was Endre Ady (1877–1919), who became the greatest poet in twentieth-century Hungarian literature. Ady, a bitter foe of the prewar ruling hierarchy of Hungary and the leading spokesman for Hungary's cultural emancipation, might well have been a decisive influence on the formation of Kun's political ideas and ideals. See also László Gellért, "Kun Béla Diákkorából [Béla Kun: The Student Years]," *Köznevelés*, March 7, 1961.

[13] Sándor Petőfi (1823–1849) and János Arany (1817–1882) were Hungary's most beloved and most significant national poets. Their patriotic poetry drew inspiration from the revolution of 1848–1849 and was both anti-German and anti-Russian.

[14] Biographic Directory in V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], vol. 25, 3rd ed., Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1931, p. 667.

five months of stormy existence,[15] but on the strength of his newly acquired notoriety Kun found it easy to obtain a staff position with the prestigious *Budapesti Napló* [*Budapest Post*]. Because of his experience in Transylvanian radical and socialist politics, he was invited to contribute to *Népszava* but was rebuffed when applying for a staff position on the paper.[16] A few years later he returned to Kolozsvár, took a job with the Workers' Insurance Bureau, and was also retained as a part-time correspondent for *Népszava*.[17]

In 1913 Kun married Irén Gál over the strenuous objections of her father. Shortly after their first child, Ágnes, was born, he was inducted into the army, and in January, 1915, he left for the eastern front,[18] where he attained the rank of reserve lieutenant. Early in 1916 he was captured by the Russians and shipped to a prisoner of war camp in the Tomsk military district. An officer from his company recalls that en route to the camp Kun was twice manhandled by Transylvanian officers for trying to "pass for a Gentile" during one of the frequent head counts conducted by the Russian guards.[19] In the camp, however, Kun met several fellow socialists, some of whom

[15] During this time Kun was involved in a duel with the editor of the city's progovernment daily, a lawsuit with his own publisher, and several libel suits from various large land owners and the Catholic archdiocese. A jury trial held in April, 1907, acquitted him of most of these charges. Nándor Hegedűs, "Kun Béla mint Fiatal Ujságiró [Béla Kun as a Young Journalist]," *Magyar Nemzet,* March 19, 1961; and László Rácz, "A Nagyváradi Munkásmozgalomról [The Workers' Movement in Nagyvárad]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 3, 1964, esp. pp. 234–242.

[16] Garami, then editor of *Népszava,* later recalled Kun's reproachful remark during the Hungarian Soviet Republic: "Had you taken me in at *Népszava* we would not be on opposite sides now." Ernő Garami, *Forrongó Magyarország* [*Revolutionary Hungary*], Leipzig–Wien: Pegazus, 1922, p. 122.

[17] Since the Institute for Party History of the Central Committee, Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, has not published a volume of its *Selected Documents* for the years of 1907–1917, the author has had to rely on strongly biased socialist and recent but very inaccurate communist memoir literature. The only documentable proof of Kun's activities in national social democratic politics is his two speeches, the first mildly critical of *Népszava's* alleged lack of concern with rural agitation and propaganda, and the second questioning the party's choice of allies during the political crisis in the spring at the socialist party congress in October, 1913. *Minutes of the Twentieth Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party Held in Budapest,* Oct. 19–23, 1913, Budapest: A Népszava Könyvkereskedés Kiadása, 1913, pp. 170–171, 215–216.

[18] In the middle of March, 1919, the Budapest press, quoting an unnamed delegate's speech at the Budapest Workers' Council on March 13, reported that Kun allegedly had misappropriated a small sum (300 crowns) from the Insurance Bureau's travel funds, but subsequent litigation and disciplinary measures were dropped when Kun volunteered to serve in the army.

[19] Adám Nagy, *Kun Béla Oroszországban* [*Béla Kun in Russia*], Budapest: Központi Sajtóvállalat, 1919, pp. 7–10.

he had known personally from the Kolozsvár Hungarian Social Democratic Party organization.

Among Kun's newly found comrades were Ferenc Münnich from the Kassa party organization and Ernő Seidler from the Budapest Eighth district party stronghold.[20] Shortly after Kun's arrival he and a group of twelve to fifteen junior officers started a Marxist study circle that included several noncommissioned officers and enlisted men. By the fall of 1916, members of the group were reading and discussing some of the available German-language works of Marx and Engels and had begun to learn Russian to follow the war news in the local newspapers.

These activities went on uninterrupted by Kun's four-month sojourn in a Tomsk hospital, where he was treated for asthma and a lung condition.[21] His return to the camp in the spring of 1917 was soon followed by a near riot in the compound of the enlisted men. The issue—as in hundreds of other camps at that time—centered on the officers' right to a first selection from Red Cross packages and the orderlies' refusal to work for the officers without compensation. Kun and two fellow officers, Münnich and Seidler, immediately seizing upon the opportunity, went over to the enlisted men's compound and delivered rousing speeches demanding the institution of a system of elected camp stewards in charge of the welfare of all inmates, regardless of rank. A hastily convened officers' disciplinary court disavowed the Kun group's actions but deferred their sentencing to a military court, to be convened after the war.

In the meantime, the resourceful Kun secured permission from the Bolshevik-Menshevik-controlled Tomsk city soviet—some of whose leaders he had befriended during the winter—for himself and a few of his comrades to live outside the prison camp.[22] Freed from

[20] Prewar organizational affiliations of the Tomsk socialists are established from various Confidential Reports of the Counterintelligence Department, Budapest Military District, from miscellaneous memoirs, and from Ferenc Münnich, "Foreword" to Béla Kun, *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaságról* [*On the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1958, pp. 9–13.

[21] According to a campmate, after his discharge from the hospital Kun took refuge in a mental asylum for two months to escape the hardships of winter in the camp. This, however, cannot be corroborated from other sources. Cf. Nagy, *Béla Kun . . .*, p. 19.

[22] A similar privilege was accorded to non-Hungarian and German prisoners of war to encourage enlistment in one of the Slavic units that had been organized by the Provisional Government to bolster the Russian army's thinning ranks on its western front. More than 500,000 men so recruited served in the Russian army at the end of 1917. Manushevich, "From the History . . . ," p. 43.

the rigors of camp life and permitted to remove the V.P. (POW) sign from his uniform, Kun plunged into the socialist politics of Tomsk. On April 12, 1917, he wrote a letter to the president of the Tomsk organization of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party offering his services to the socialist cause.[23] Kun recalled the embrace of Plekhanov and the Japanese socialist Katayama, which he allegedly had witnessed at the 1904 Amsterdam congress of the Second International, regarding it as a gesture worth being reenacted between the Russian and Hungarian socialists as a sign of true proletarian internationalism. "As a member of the Transylvanian Commission of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party," Kun extended his personal greetings to the victorious Russian social democracy and signed the letter "Béla Kun, President of the Kolozsvár (Hungary) Workers' Insurance Bureau, presently a prisoner-of-war officer."[24]

By the end of April Kun and his comrades had received and accepted invitations to join the Tomsk organization.[25] Shortly thereafter Kun was made a member of the *guberniia* executive committee,[26] and by the middle of the summer, his group was entrusted by the Tomsk soviet to issue passes and work permits for the prisoners of war. In a matter of a few weeks, nearly every enlisted man in the camp and a number of the officers had joined Kun's group and recognized him as a man of influence and a dispenser of useful advice.

Similar events were taking place elsewhere in Siberia and European Russia. In the Omsk military district, where 197,000 of the 207,000 prisoners of war were Hungarian,[27] former socialist organ-

[23] Text of Kun's letter in M. Chuganov, "Magyar Internacionalisták Harca a Szovjethatalomért Szibériában [Hungarian Internationalists for the Soviet Rule in Siberia]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 2, 1959, pp. 195ff.

[24] The author has been unable to find evidence to support Kun's claim concerning his trip to Amsterdam. As late as 1913 he was not a member of the Transylvanian Commission. Kun's letter first appeared in *Novaia Zhizn'* (Tomsk) April 12, 1917, and is reproduced in György Milei, "Kun Béla 1917–1918-ban Tomszkban Megjelent Irásai: Dokumentumok [Béla Kun's Writings Published in Tomsk 1917–1918: Documents]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1962, p. 110 (hereafter "Kun Documents").

[25] Chuganov, "Hungarian Internationalists . . . ," p. 197.

[26] B. Khudiakov, "Foreword" to Béla Kun, *Uroki Proletarskoi Revolutsii v Vengrii* [*Lessons of the Proletarian Revolution in Hungary*], Moscow: Gospolizdat, 1960, p. 6.

[27] I. G. Matveev, "Bor'ba Revolutsionnykh Vengrov Protiv Kolchaka i Interventov v Sibiri [The Struggle of Revolutionary Hungarians with Kolchak and the Invaders in Siberia]," *Boevoe Gody* [*The Years of Struggle*], Novosibirsk: Novosibirskoi Knizhnoe Izd-vo, 1959, p. 114.

izers Károly Ligeti and József Rabinovits and several former Galileist junior officers formed a revolutionary prisoner-of-war organization in late 1917 and joined the local Bolshevik faction before the October Revolution.[28] In Krasnoiarsk, at the initiative of Dezső Forgács, Artur Dukesz, and the socialist writer Máté Zalka, several Bolshevik-affiliated prisoner-of-war organizations were founded at the end of 1917.[29] In Turkestan former agrarian radicals, syndicalists, and intellectuals established a committee of socialist prisoners of war early in 1918. At first a primarily nonpolitical interest group, it subsequently became a constituent unit of the Communist Party of Foreign Workers and Peasants in the Territory of Turkestan.[30]

These spontaneous upheavals in Russia had much in common. Leaders and organizers of "camp revolutions" were invariably former socialist, Galileist, or radical Jewish officers. The issues were not political at the beginning, but as the events of 1917 progressed and the end of war drew near, they became so. Of the two main Russian socialist factions, the Bolsheviks were usually the first to establish contact with politically oriented prisoner-of-war groups.

Since many future leaders of the revolutionary prisoner-of-war movement were recruited from the Tomsk group (whose activities were comparable to other such organizations), and because Béla Kun made significant contributions to the ideology of Hungarian communism while in Tomsk, let us concentrate on the record of the Tomsk organization.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 115ff; Chuganov, "Hungarian Internationalists . . . ," pp. 201–203; Lajos Terbe, "Szibériai Magyar Lapok, 1915–1921 [Hungarian Newspapers in Siberia]," *Az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Évkönyve*, 1958 [Yearbook of the National Széchényi Library], Budapest: 1959, pp. 260–263; and "Ligeti Károlyról: Szófia Venckovics-Ligeti Visszaemlékezései [On Károly Ligeti: Reminiscences of Sofiia Ventskovich-Ligeti]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 4, 1958, pp. 142–164.

[29] Dezső Forgács was formerly the head of the Szabadka Hungarian party organization; Artúr Dukesz was formerly the secretary of the Galileo Circle at the University of Budapest; Máté Zalka distinguished himself in Frunze's army and later, as General Lukács, fought and died in the Spanish Civil War. Cf. Mateev, "The Struggle of Revolutionary . . . ," p. 118; and Máté Zalka, "Krasnoiarskie Vospominanie [Recollections from Krasnoiarsk]," in Györkei, *Hungarian Internationalists . . .*, pp. 282–286.

[30] Györkei, "Data on . . . ," p. 638; András Zsilák, "A Külföldi Munkások és Földművesek Kommunista Pártja a Turkesztáni Szövetséges Tanácsköztársaság Területén, 1918–1919 [The Communist Party of Foreign Workers and Peasants in the Territory of the Turkestan Soviet Republic]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 3, 1962, p. 65; and I. S. Sologubov, *Inostrannye Kommunisty v Turkestane*, 1918–1919 [*Foreign Communists in Turkestan*], Tashkent: Gos. Izd. Uzbeksoi SSR, 1961, pp. 25–27.

After receiving Kun's letter, the editors of *Novaia Zhizn'*, impressed by the comradely aid offered by the foreign socialist dignitary, invited Kun to give the benefit of his Marxist knowledge and expertise on foreign events to the Tomsk organization of Russian socialists. In his capacity as news analyst Kun wrote several articles[31] which illustrate his early views on a number of the problems he was to encounter again in formulating the strategy and tactics of the Hungarian Communist Party between November, 1918, and July, 1919. His reflections on the revolutionary changes in Russia and on the tactics of Russian socialists under conditions of the dual-power period and after October represent an important facet in his development from left-center socialism to unswerving Bolshevism.

"Although I worked for the common cause far from the Russian comrades," Kun began his first article in April, 1917, "I too absorbed the air of the West, where the great ideas of social democracy were born. Now, in the light of the new Great Russian Revolution, I understand: Ex oriente lux."[32]

After this introductory item, Kun paused for a half-year—probably owing to his new duties at the *gubkom* and agitprop responsibilities at the camp. The second piece, published on November 18, was concerned with the conditions of the peasantry in Hungary. The most significant part of this otherwise undistinguished essay was a statement which Kun attributed to an "outstanding Hungarian peasant party worker" whom he once knew:[33]

> We peasants consider land only as a means of producton which is absolutely necessary for our existence. We do not think of the land as becoming our private property. We only want to have the use of the land. There is only one obstacle: the private ownership of the land. We are deeply convinced that we will have the use of the land only when it becomes our joint (or cooperative) property.

Needless to say, these words could never have been uttered by even the most radical peasant members (of which there were few) of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. It is more likely that Kun was not merely misquoting an imaginary peasant, but had begun to accept his cherished orthodox Marxist beliefs as fact. Possibly this process

[31] Six of these were recently republished in Hungary. "Kun Documents," pp. 111–130.

[32] "A Hungarian Social Democrat on the Russian Revolution," *Novaia Zhizn'* (Tomsk), April 22, 1917, in *ibid.*, pp. 111–112.

[33] "Kun Documents," pp. 113–116.

of self-delusion was reinforced by the currently issued Russian Land Decree, which provided for nationalization of the land in preparation for its future joint cultivation.

In December Kun prefaced his highly optimistic article "Will There Be a Revolution in Germany?" as follows: "Recent events of the Russian Revolution—which by now have assumed the characteristics of a permanent revolution . . . have proved that changes that took place in Russia represent not the *last bourgeois revolution* . . . but the *first proletarian revolution*."[34] His uncompromising conclusion was that "the objective conditions for a proletarian revolution in Germany are completely ripe." He also took to task Kautsky's recently published study, which was pessimistic about the chances for a revolution in Germany. In Kun's opinion, "Karl Liebknecht and his group are not in an isolated minority, but, in fact, represent the majority of the German proletariat." He argued that "starvation, flourishing speculation, war weariness, desire for peace, and growing inflation" would drive the masses into a revolution which "cannot be stopped by any last-minute concessions and stop-gap measures that the German bourgeoisie may devise. . . . The real representatives of the German proletariat are Liebknecht, Ledebour, and Hoffer, just as the Russian workers are led by Lenin, Trotsky, Krilenko, and Riazanov. And that means revolution! . . ."[35]

It appears that from his Tomsk vantage point Kun had an immediate grasp of the international implications of the "permanent" Russian revolution and was correct in assessing the probable political consequences of the war on the exhausted peoples of Central Europe and Germany. Despite a liberal peppering of his writings with *non sequitur* quotations from Marx and Engels, the pedestrian ideologue displayed in these articles and his other contributions to the Tomsk press an uncanny talent for reducing complex issues to plausible truisms and timely slogans.[36]

Foreign Socialists and the Russian Revolution

Meanwhile, the Hungarian socialists in Tomsk—as well as Omsk, Krasnoiarsk, Kazan, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Ekaterinburg, and

[34] *Sibirski Rabochi* (Tomsk), Dec. 1, 1917, in *ibid.*, pp. 116–119.

[35] Instead of "Hoffer," Kun meant Adolf Hoffman (1858–1930), a German Independent Socialist leader. *Ibid.*, pp. 118–119.

[36] "On the Revolutionary International," *Sibirski Rabochi* (Tomsk), nos. 2–3, January, 1918; and "The Working Class and Communism," *Znamiia Revolutsiia* (Tomsk), April 14, 1918, in *ibid.*, pp. 120–130.

elsewhere—were becoming fast friends of the local Bolshevik and Menshevik organizations. Several local prisoner-of-war groups received arms from the Bolsheviks and became Red Guard auxiliaries in at least twenty cities and towns during the six-week period preceeding the Revolution. Activists in some camps prepared handwritten translations of Lenin's "April Theses," supplementing it with their own slogans of "Peace and Freedom," "Down with the Imperialist War," etc.[37] It is safe to assume, however, that regardless of the effectiveness of Lenin's arguments and the popularity of such political slogans, the leading motive of many of the prisoners who flocked to join the Hungarian Bolsheviks was economic and psychological rather than political. Men who had been exposed to socialist agitation for two or three years in prison camps found it difficult to resist the incentives of food, drink, warm clothing, a new pair of boots, and freedom of movement within the confines of the city or district, especially with such incentives reinforced by popular political slogans.[38]

All sources, including the intelligence experts in the Hungarian Ministry of War, agree that Bolshevik victory in the October Revolution was generally welcomed by the more than one-half million Hungarian prisoners of war in Russia.[39] Two former Hungarian socialists, Ferenc Jancsik and Frigyes Karikás, who had worked at the Moscow Guyon Works, took part in storming the walls of the Kremlin, and it was claimed that Hungarian Red Guard units fought with arms for the establishment of Soviet rule in sixteen cities.[40]

During the chaotic weeks following the October Revolution

[37] Popov, in "Revolutionary Activities . . . ," p. 80, quotes reminiscences of Sándor Sziklai in *Sibirskie Ogni*, no. 2, 1958, p. 111. See also Györkei, *Hungarian Internationalists . . .*, p. 305.

[38] Report of the Central Siberian Oblast Conference of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Bolshevik) to the Seventh Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party (Bolshevik) claimed 5,000 members in the area, some of whom had recently joined the party. This figure presumably included the Bolshevik prisoners of war as well. V. S. Flerov (ed.), *Bor'ba za Vlast' Sovetov v Tomskoi Gubernii*, 1917–1919 [*Struggle for the Rule of the Soviet in the Tomsk Province*], Tomsk: 1957, pp. 95–96.

[39] Gusztáv Gratz (ed.), *A Bolsevizmus Magyarországon* [*Bolshevism in Hungary*], Budapest: Franklin, 1921, pp. 68–70; see also "Confidential Report" of the Commander, Csót (Hungary) Military Prison Camp, B.I.-81 858/1918 II. res.

[40] According to Gyula Varga, a veteran commander of the Russian civil war, quoted in Györkei and Józsa, "Data on . . . ," p. 30; see also Zharov, *Internationalist Units . . .*, p. 11.

Bolshevik-supported prisoner-of-war Red Guard units were formed in more than 400 cities and towns, with units of more than 100 in 76 of these cities. These units performed many tasks, ranging from guard duty at the Kremlin to aiding Bolsheviks in suppressing a so-called "Junker uprising" in the Omsk area in Siberia.[41] Several Hungarians who distinguished themselves were subsequently entrusted with positions of responsibility in local soviet organizations. In Tomsk Ferenc Münnich became the city commander of Red Guard units and Károly Reiner was appointed president of the Tomsk people's court.[42] In Omsk József Rabinovits, Károly Ligeti, and József Somlai were elected deputies to the city soviet and founded the Hungarian International Social Democratic (Bolshevik) Party in February, 1918.[43] In Krasnoiarsk Dezső Forgács and Ernő Somodi were elected deputies to the city soviet.[44]

Lest these peripheral manifestations of cooperation of foreign prisoner groups with local Soviet authorities give a misleading picture of the place and actual influence of foreigners in the events of the immediate postrevolution period, it should be stressed that only a few thousand of the more than two million prisoners of war and refugees in Russia were involved in any kind of revolutionary activity at that time.[45]

In early December, 1917, Béla Kun, "under orders from central party organs," left Tomsk for Petrograd, where he met Lenin.[46] On his arrival Kun joined Karl Radek's International Propaganda Department of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs and in this capacity became the editor of *Nemzetközi Szocialista* [*International Socialist*], a Soviet propaganda publication directed primarily at Hungarian

[41] Manushevich, "From the History . . . ," p. 52; and Chuganov, "Hungarian Internationalists . . . ," p. 201.

[42] Ferenc Münnich, "Tomskie Internatsionalisty [The Tomsk Internationalists]," in Györkei, *Hungarian Internationalists . . .* , pp. 220–221; and Nagy, *Béla Kun . . .* , pp. 14–17.

[43] Matveev, "The Struggle of Revolutionary . . . ," pp. 115ff.

[44] Zalka, "Recollections from . . . ," pp. 282–286.

[45] It is interesting to note that recent Soviet literature on the revolution tends to give a great deal of credit to Polish and Finnish socialists for the aid rendered to Bolsheviks before October, 1917. Manushevich, "From the History . . . ," pp. 44–46; Shumenko, *Militant Solidarity . . .* , pp. 7–9; and A. Ia. Manushevich, *Pol'skie Internatsionalisty v Bor'be za Pobedu Sovetskoi Vlasti v Rossii* [*Polish Internationalists for Soviet Victory in Russia*], Moscow: Izd. "Nauka," 1965.

[46] Chuganov, "Hungarian Internationalists . . . ," p. 200, and Münnich, "Foreword" to Kun, *On the Hungarian . . .* , pp. 13–14.

soldiers on the Ukrainian front.[47] Later in December he took over *Fackel* [*Torch*], the German-language sister publication of *Nemzetközi Szocialista,* substituting for Radek, who was serving as a member of the Russian peace mission to Brest-Litovsk.[48]

Like John Reed, Boris Reinstein, and other foreign socialists, Kun engineered a concerted Soviet peace offensive during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. These activities contributed to the demoralization of the Austro-Hungarian and German troops on the Ukrainian front. A propaganda campaign aimed at foreign prisoners of war in Russia prepared the ground for the Bolshevik recruiting campaign for the Red Army in the spring of 1918. Since these efforts were largely responsible for the success of Soviet peace propaganda in the "hinterland" of the Central Powers, and with the January strikes in Austria, Hungary, and Germany, the Central Powers were for a time greatly handicapped in their negotiations with the Trotsky-led Russian delegation at Brest-Litovsk.[49]

Political activity and propaganda among prisoner groups in European Russia bore its first fruits with the formation of assorted socialist prisoner-of-war groups, particularly in Moscow and Petrograd. Each of these groups announced its support for the new regime in Russia and its peace measures abroad.[50] The first official Soviet

[47] Györkei, "Data on . . . ," p. 32; Ferenc Münnich, "Béla Kun," in Györkei, *Hungarian Internationalists . . .* , p. 186; according to Lajos Terbe, "A Szovjetúnió Európai Részében Megjelent Magyar Lapok, 1917–1921 [Hungarian Newspapers in European Russia," in *Az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Evkönyve,* 1959 [*Yearbook of the National Széchényi Library*], Budapest: 1960, p. 242, the full title of the publication was *Nemzetközi Szocialista* [*International Socialist*], *Sotsialist Internatsionalist Vengerskii Organ Mezhdunarodnogo Otdela Vseros, Ts IK SR, SiK Deputatov* [*Hungarian Organ, International Department, All-Russian Central Executive Committee of Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies*]. The first issue was published on Dec. 14, 1917 (New Style).

[48] Béla Kun's "Foreword" to the first 1932 Russian edition of Tibor Szamuely's *Riadó* [*Alarm*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1957, p. 17.

[49] On the organization and personnel of the International Propaganda Department of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, see M. P. Iroshnikov, "Iz Istorii Organizatsii Narodnogo Komissariata Inostrannykh Del [From the History of the Organization of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs]," *Istoriia SSSR,* no. 1, 1964, pp. 105–116. According to this source, the department was soon reorganized into the Bureau for International Revolutionary Propaganda, People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs (p. 112n).

[50] Shumenko, *Militant Solidarity . . .* , pp. 27–32. See also Ghita Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania,* 1944–1962, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, pp. 6–9.

statement on the matter was contained in a long *Izvestiia* editorial of Dec. 15, 1917.[51] It called on foreign soldiers to "support the socialist revolution" and to "come to the defense of peace and brotherhood of all nations."[52] This opening salvo was followed in rapid succession by several important moves, each serving to facilitate some aspect of prisoner-of-war involvement in Russian affairs. *Izvestiia* reported on December 23 that on the previous day "the House of Delegates of Social Democratic Prisoners of War in the Moscow Military District" had met in the Hotel Dresden. This body—consisting of 200 representatives of the 20,000 prisoners of war in the area—expressly endorsed Bolshevik aims and called on the prisoners to organize groups for the "improvement of their legal and economic status and for the exercise of their freedoms under the government of the proletariat."[53] On December 29 Trotsky presided over a meeting of prisoner-of-war delegates preparatory to forming a central organization in the Petrograd area.[54] In early January, 1918, "at the suggestion of A. S. Eunikidze, who worked under Ia. M. Sverdlov," an All-Russian Prisoner of War Bureau [attached to the Front Commission, Military Section, All-Russian Central Executive Committee, Soviets of Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants Deputies] was established because "the conditions were ripe for a special organ capable of fulfilling the spiritual and material needs of the working class elements of the prisoners of war."[55]

The Forming of a Hungarian Bolshevik Hard Core

During these months Kun made strenuous efforts to build up a Hungarian prisoner-of-war organization in Moscow. A Hungarian typesetter working for *Nemzetközi Szocialista* recalled that "Kun sought out former Hungarian Social Democrats and trade-union activists. . . . We saw him every day at the Hotel Dresden, where he lectured to us on the history of the Bolshevik party and on Lenin's

[51] Dates hereafter according to New Style.

[52] Shumenko, *Militant Solidarity . . .*, pp. 38–40.

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 40. Zharov, in *Internationalist Units . . .*, p. 11, noted that on Dec. 26, 1917, the Moscow area prisoner-of-war delegates elected a central executive committee of prisoners of war with jurisdiction in the Moscow military district.

[54] I[van] Ulianov, "Oktiabr'skaia Revolutsiia i Voennoplennye [The October Revolution and the Prisoners of War]," *Proletarskaia Revolutsiia,* no. 7 (90), 1929, p. 96.

[55] The bureau was headed by I. Ulianov, whose reminiscences are most useful in obtaining an overall view of Soviet policies toward foreign prisoners of war.

years in the underground and in exile in Switzerland."[56] Among Kun's new comrades were several people who later constituted the "Bolshevik hard-core" leadership of the Hungarian prisoner-of-war movement—Reserve Lieutenant Tibor Szamuely, a former militant atheist and socialist journalist;[57] cavalry officer Endre Rudnyánszky;[58] Károly Vántus, a former staff member of *Népszava*; Ernő Pór, a former Hungarian Social Democratic Party organizer in Slovakia; Ferenc Jancsik and Frigyes Karikás, prominent syndicalist shop stewards from the northern Budapest industrial suburbs; Ferenc Münnich and Imre Szilágyi from Kun's Tomsk organization; József Rabinovits from the Omsk prisoner-of-war group; and a few others from nearby camps.[59]

Little is known about the activities of the Moscow Hungarian Bolshevik "study circle" in the first two months of 1918 except from Kun's account of the circumstances of his meeting and collaboration with Tibor Szamuely in Moscow, where both worked at the district committee of socialist prisoner-of-war organizations:[60]

> We first met at a conference at the Povorskaia Street prisoner-of-war committee. Szamuely, like myself, threw away his army uniform and wore civilian clothes. He still insisted on going to America. [Kun earlier relates that Szamuely was determined to go to New York City and join the staff of *Előre,* a socialist Hungarian-language weekly.] At first we failed to convince him to stay and help us at the *Nemzetközi Szocialista* and *Fackel,* . . . but he finally gave in and joined our staff. . . .
>
> We could not keep in touch during those weeks. Szamuely left for the Petrograd office, and I, with a small group of prisoners, went against the Germans, . . . who were getting dangerously close to Petrograd, then the capital of

[56] Pál Gisztl, "Az Oroszországi Kommunista (Bolsevik) Párt Magyar Csoportja Megalakulásának 40. Évfordulójára: Gisztl Pál Visszaemlékezése [Reminiscences on the Fortieth Anniversary of the Formation of the Hungarian Group of the Russian Communist (Bolshevik) Party]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 2, 1958, p. 181.

[57] Szamuely had worked as a draftsman in the Nadezhdinsk Iron Works in the summer of 1917. He had been in a nearby prisoner-of-war camp, where, following an argument on an undisclosed subject, certain officers beat him and ejected him from the camp with two broken ribs. Cf. Sándor Sziklai, "Egy Magyar Parasztfiú az Orosz Forradalomban [A Hungarian Peasant Boy in the Russian Revolution]," in Mrs. Ernő Lányi (ed.), *Vagyunk az Ifjú Gárda* [*We Are the Young Guard*] (a collection of memoirs), Budapest: Ifjusági Kiadó, 1959, p. 56.

[58] Rudnyánszky was a lawyer in civilian life. He joined the Moscow group after marrying Bukharin's sister, whom he had met as a volunteer worker for the Petrograd Bolshevik organization in early 1917. (Information from Mr. Sándor Kőrösi-Krizsán of Munich.)

[59] Gisztl, "Reminiscences . . . ," pp. 181–182.

[60] Kun, "Foreword" to Szamuely, *Alarm,* pp. 17–18.

Russia. After our troops were defeated at Narva and the Brest-Litovsk Treaty was signed . . . our detachment returned to Moscow, together with the [Russian] government, which was also obliged to move from Petrograd to Moscow.

According to Article II of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, "The Contracting Parties will refrain from any agitation or propaganda against the Government or the public or military institutions of the Other Party. . . ."[61] Anticipating this stipulation, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs stopped publishing its German, Hungarian, Czech, and Rumanian propaganda newspapers on February 23. Still concerned about a possible breach of peace by well-armed German units not far from Petrograd, the commissariat, like the rest of the Soviet government, transferred all operations to Moscow, which on March 12 became the new capital of Russia.[62]

The activities of Kun and his dozen or so collaborators were thwarted, of course, by the dramatic internal power struggle raging among the Bolsheviks on the alternatives of "peace," "neither war nor peace," and "resolute international revolutionary struggle." These views were represented by Lenin, Trotsky, and Bukharin, the respective spokesmen of factions arguing for one and against the two other approaches.[63] The outcome of these debates was to affect vitally the future and the very existence of the Soviet government in Russia and also to determine the guidelines for Soviet efforts in preparing to carry the cause of proletarian revolution—or the "bacilli of Bolshevism," as Lenin put it at the Eighth Congress—to Germany and Central Europe.

Lenin's "Theses on the Question of Immediate Conclusion of a Separate and Annexationist Peace,"[64] of January 7, 1918, although rejecting Bukharin's arguments for "an immediate revolutionary war," left the door open for preparations for such an event.[65] By implication, this view (which was eventually to prevail after one of the greatest crises in the party's history) endorsed the essentially leftist concept of a twofold utilization of human raw material (represented by the millions of prisoners of war and uprooted refugees) in the

[61] Jane Degras, *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy,* vol. 1, New York: Oxford University Press, 1951, p. 52.

[62] James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution,* 1917–1918: *Documents and Materials,* Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1961, p. 530.

[63] Robert V. Daniels, *The Conscience of the Revolution,* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960, pp. 70–80.

[64] V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], vol. 22, 3rd ed., Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1932, p. 198.

[65] Daniels, *The Conscience . . .,* pp. 70–71.

interests of the Russian Revolution and a world revolution.[66] The leftist thesis passed an encouraging, though inconclusive, test after the secession of the Ukrainian Rada on February 9, when the precarious military balance of power shifted suddenly in the favor of Germany and the Red Army found itself desperately short of experienced field commanders.[67] The Moscow and Petrograd Bolshevik organizations and the Prisoner of War Bureau launched an emergency recruiting campaign in the nearby prison camps, offering prisoners cash rewards and guaranteed safe passage back to their homelands after the completion of a few month's service as officers in the Red Army.[68] The Prisoner of War Bureau held several mass meetings in Moscow, Petrograd, Iaroslav, Tver, and Ivanovo-Voznesensk, "with thousands of former prisoners of war—outraged by the German's breach of faith—participating and offering their services to the young Soviet state."[69] The speedy conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty prevented these foreign volunteers from proving themselves on the battlefield, but the availability of foreign soldiers for the defense of Russia was not to be forgotten by the Soviet leadership during the coming eighteen months.

On March 14, 1918, the Conference of International Social Democratic Prisoners of War was held in Moscow. The meeting, presided over by Sverdlov, resolved that "the shameless German advance will not thwart the cause of world revolution" and proceeded to consider an agenda that included the organization of an international Communist Party; the election of commissions on organization, education, and agitation-propaganda; and the convocation of an all-Russian congress of political emigrants and prisoners of war.

Ivan Ulianov, who delivered the main address in behalf of the All-Russian Prisoner of War Bureau, urged the conference to "continue its international propaganda which—under the changed circumstances—should be carried on among the proletariat of Western

[66] Cf. "Minority Resolution for Revolutionary War at the Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)" in Bunyan and Fisher, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, pp. 528–529.

[67] A recent Soviet study suggests that between February 25 and April 1, 1918, the Moscow and Petrograd party organizations could mobilize only 60,000 workers to defend these crucially important districts. S. M. Kliatskin, "Nekotorye Dannye o Mobilizatsii Trudiashchikhsia v Krasnuiu Armiiu v 1918–1920 [Some Data on the Workers' Mobilization to the Red Army in 1918–1920]," *Voprosy Istorii*, no. 7, 1964, pp. 207–211.

[68] Györkei, "Data on . . . ," p. 32.

[69] For text of news reports in *Petrogradskaia Pravda*, no. 29, Feb. 19, 1918, and *Pravda*, Feb. 18, 1918, see Shumenko, *Militant Solidarity* . . . , pp. 47–50.

and Eastern Europe [who are present] as prisoners of war in Russia . . . and [who] upon return to their homes will tell what they saw and experienced here."[70]

During the first three months of 1918 Béla Kun had established himself as one of the most influential foreign socialists in Petrograd and Moscow. His personal attributes served him well: his boyish enthusiasm and considerable charm made him a family friend of Krupskaia and Lenin's sister; his reputation for being an indefatigable organizer, a quick-witted orator, and an able journalist won him the respect and friendship of Bukharin; his effective hold on and the success of the Petrograd-Moscow team of Hungarian organizers made him appear to be a man with a future in the movement. Kun had been contributing to *Pravda* since January and was to publish sixteen articles in that year. He was strongly opposed to Lenin's formula on the Brest-Litovsk Treaty—as was his mentor, Bukharin—and was eager to do his share in countermanding the restrictions on agitprop work imposed on Russia by the German imperialists.[71]

Tibor Szamuely and Endre Rudnyánszky also distinguished themselves with their effective agitation and propaganda work in the Moscow area. Szamuely proved to be a tireless organizer and was superior even to Kun in thoroughness and administrative ability. At the March 14 conference Szamuely, Rabinovits, Jancsik, and a few other foreign socialists were entrusted with preparations[72] for the

[70] Ulianov, "The October Revolution . . . ," p. 102; and *Pravda,* March 16, 1918.

[71] Vilmos Böhm, *Két Forradalom Tüzében* [*In the Crossfire of Two Revolutions*], Vienna: Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1923, p. 344; and Michael Károlyi, *Memoirs: Faith without Illusion,* New York: Dutton, 1957, p. 159.

[72] *Petrogradskaia Pravda,* no. 54, March 21, 1918, in Shumenko, *Militant Solidarity . . . ,* p. 55. The congress was attended by 201 voting delegates representing 52,426 "organized prisoners of war." Featured speakers at the opening session included Bukharin for the Bolshevik Central Committee, I. Ulianov for the prisoner-of-war bureau, Kun for the Federation of Foreign Groups, Szamuely for the Hungarian Group, and other Polish, German, and Czech left socialists. It appears that Hungarian delegates served as chairmen of the credentials, steering, and military committees. *Pravda,* April 14, 16, and 21, 1918; "Proletárfoglyok Országos Kongresszusa [National Congress of Proletarian Prisoners of War]," *Forradalom* (Omsk), in Mrs. Sándor Gábor *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement,* vol. 5, Nov. 7, 1917–March 21, 1919, Budapest: Szikra, 1956, pp. 106–110; András Zsilák, "Az OK(b)P Magyar Csoportjának Szerepe a Vörös Hadsereg Internacionalista Egységeinek Szervezésében, 1918–1919 [Role of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) in Organizing Internationalist Units for the Red Army]," *Történelmi Szemle,* no. 3, 1961. Haxthausen, the Danish Consul General, also reported on the doings of foreign socialists at this congress. The report is reproduced in Baja, *History of Captivity in Russia . . . ,* p. 351.

scheduled All-Russian Congress of Prisoners of War to be held April 14–18 in Moscow. In accordance with plans outlined at the March 14 conference, on March 24, 1918, Kun and his comrades established the Hungarian Group of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) in Moscow. With this step the Hungarians achieved the dubious distinction of being the first foreign communist group that was founded fully under the auspices of the Russian Bolsheviks.[73] As a charter member of the Hungarian Group later related:

> Béla Kun presided over the meeting [of March 24]. . . . He talked about the history of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), the great struggles Lenin waged for [the victory of] Marxist ideals in the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, the organizational principles of the Bolshevik party, and about Lenin's views on the "new type of party." . . .
>
> Concerning our tasks . . . as the Hungarian section of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), we were exhorted to carry on organizational, educational, and cultural party works among the prisoners of war . . . for the sake of a strong Communist Party to be formed after our return to Hungary.

Kun, of course, was elected chairman of the group. On the following day he and Ernő Pór, secretary of the group, drafted a letter[74] to

[73] On the basis of a republished manifesto from *Forradalom* (Omsk), no. 6, March 17, 1918, it may be surmised that there had existed at least two groups or sections (Rumanian and Hungarian) of the Russian Communist Party before March 24, Györkei, *Hungarian Internationalists . . .*, pp. 107–109. Other foreign communist groups of the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), were established in the following sequence: Yugoslav (late March, 1918), Rumanian (April 13, 1918), German (April 24, 1918), Czechoslovak (May 28, 1918), Finnish (July, 1918), Italian (September, 1918), Bulgarian (October, 1918), Anglo-American (late 1918–early 1919). E. Yaroslavski (ed.), "Otchet O Deiatel'nosti Federatsii Inostrannykh Grupp [Report on the Federation of Foreign Groups]," *Vos'moi S' 'ezd RKP* [*The Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik*], Moscow: Partizdat, 1933, pp. 434–439. For an extensively documented survey of the activities of the foreign groups, see A. A. Struchkov, "Internatsional'nye Gruppy RKP(b) i Voinskie Formirovaniia v Sovetskoi Rossii, 1918–1920 [The Foreign Groups of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) and [Foreign] Military Units in Soviet Russia]," *Istoricheskii Arkhiv*, no. 4, 1957, pp. 3–36; and V. I. Lenin, "Federatsiia Innostrannykh Grupp, Ts K RKP(b) [Federation of Foreign Groups]," *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*]. 3rd ed., vol. 24, Moscow: Marx-Engel-Lenin Institute, 1931, pp. 753–754.

[74] In Appendix C three letters thus exchanged and the Hungarian Group's monthly report for August, 1918, are reproduced in full. For a description of Sverdlov's meeting with the newly elected leaders of the Hungarian Group, see József Horváth *et al.* (eds.), 133 *Nap* [133 *Days*], Budapest: Táncsics, 1960, pp. 40–41. Revealing as the items of correspondence are between the Hungarian Group and the Bolshevik Central Committee, they fail to inform us of the nature of the over-all Russian design and of the way in which the general Bolshevik revolutionary priorities were translated and applied to Hungarian conditions by Kun and Szamuely, the chief strategists of the Hungarian Group.

the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party, (Bolshevik) informing it of the formation of the Hungarian Group, its present activities, and future plans.

Initial Bolshevik indoctrination efforts were directed toward those Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, Serbs, and Rumanians in Russia who, literally as a captive audience, were obliged to avail themselves of agitprop pressures as members of the "internationalist" units, as refugees, or as prisoners awaiting shipment to their homelands. However, physical exposure to revolutionary agitation and propaganda and the willingness to listen or to cooperate proved to be two different matters. After Masaryk's tour among the Czech legions the Bolshevik chances for enlisting Czech units into the Red Army were virtually nil. In April and May, 1918, Kun's Czech colleague Alois Muna could recruit few soldiers willing to fight their countrymen who had joined the Whites. In fact, the Czech legions played a significant role in engaging several Red Army units in Siberia and Southern Russia during the civil war.[75] Veterans of the Polish legions and of the South Slav *druzhiny* and most Rumanians responded similarly to Bolshevik recruiting and indoctrination efforts.[76] The strict supervision of the "no-propaganda" clause of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty by German missions and the small number of German prisoner-of-war contingents in Russia made it most difficult to gain converts among the German prisoners.

It is reasonable to conclude that less than one-half the 2.3 million prisoners (represented by 300,000 Austrians and 550,000 Hungarians) were theoretically still uncommitted, and hence available for propaganda. As it happened, however, all Austrian camps cooperated fully with the German missions in suppressing socialist agitation, while nearly all Hungarian camps (officers included) proved hostile to any kind of German control, including anti-Bolshevik measures. As a result, it was the Hungarians—who had the worst record of camp antagonisms—who lent themselves best to revolutionary propaganda and indoctrination.

A careful examination of recently republished documents concerning the record of foreign prisoner-of-war groups in Russia indicates that Hungarians played a role far out of proportion to their

[75] J. F. N. Bradley, "The Czechoslovak Revolt against the Bolsheviks," *Soviet Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, October, 1963, pp. 124–151.

[76] M. K. Dziewanowski, *The Communist Party of Poland: An Outline of History*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959, pp. 67–68; and Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania . . .*, pp. 6ff.

numbers in taking the lead in several Bolshevik-inspired enterprises in the spring and summer of 1918. There were a variety of reasons for this phenomenon: The Hungarian officers and enlisted men—100,000 of whom were to fight on the Soviet side during the civil war[77] —were strongly attracted by the slogans and material incentives offered by the Red Army. As events progressed on the western fronts, Hungarian soldiers—unlike the Czechs, Slovaks, Poles, Serbs, Croats, and Rumanians—became increasingly apprehensive about the grim prospects of postwar life in a country that was to be defeated by the Entente.

Those who escaped from the camps and managed to reach the Austro-Hungarian lines were either driven back with machine guns by German or Austro-Hungarian sentries or were immediately arrested as suspected Bolsheviks and quarantined for months in maximum-security prison camps in Hungary. Both sides conceded that the treatment accorded to returning prisoners at the "screening stations" did more to aid the Bolshevik cause than did the October Revolution and the combined efforts of Kun and his organizers.[78] Many of these men, after having been told by the local Soviet authorities to "let your own government take care of you," had their food rations withheld and were forced to join the nearest internationalist unit "out of sheer hunger and desperation."[79]

Several noncommissioned and junior officers could not resist the temptation of immediate promotion and the opportunity to lead units often three to five times larger than they ever hoped to command in their own army. Romantic and nationalistic slogans such as ". . . through blood, flames, and barricades, we shall victoriously return to our defeated homeland . . ." were given wide currency in many Bolshevik-oriented Hungarian prisoner newspapers.[80]

As a result, there was a mass of willing, mobile, and well-trained men who, with proper political coordination and guidance, could put their military talents in the service of the Red Army to defend Russia and, when the time came, to carry the torch of the revolution back to their native land.

[77] *Pravda*, March 21, 1959, in an article written to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

[78] Kun, "Foreword" to Szamuely, *Alarm*; and Gratz, *Bolshevism . . .*, p. 70.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

[80] Popov, "Revolutionary Activities . . . ," p. 87.

The former socialist organizers and radical Jewish intellectuals who led the Hungarian Group in Moscow represented probably the best team of prisoner-of-war propagandists in Russia. It may be argued that Kun, Szamuely, and their comrades who coordinated the group's activities in European Russia and Siberia were the most willing and effective foreign socialist organizers in Russia at that time. It was not accidental, therefore, that "of the more than 20,000 comrades who graduated from the [school] of the Russian revolution . . . and were sent abroad," Hungarians led the list with 5,000.[81] According to Ivan Ulianov, who as the head of the All-Russian Prisoner of War Bureau coordinated foreign prisoner activities, "these comrades were members of revolutionary organizations in Russia, attended meetings and conferences, and received and read newspapers [published by the nationality groups]."[82]

The Hungarian share of one-fourth of all "prisoner-of-war graduates of the October Revolution" was extremely significant, even with proper allowance for strongly inflated figures. It appears that the "weakest link"[83] abroad and its citizens in Russia did not, and indeed could not, escape the attention of the planners of the world revolution in Moscow.[84] The fact that Béla Kun was named the first president of the Federation of Foreign Groups and, after his departure for Hungary, was succeeded by another Hungarian, Endre Rudnyánszky, tends to support the assumption that in the Russian leaders' opinion, next to Germany, Hungary was the most likely target for revolutionary designs.[85] It is also of interest that protocol-conscious Soviet historians invariably rank Hungarians in first place when listing various

[81] Followed by Germans (3,000 including Austrians), Czechoslovaks (2,000), Rumanians (1,500), Yugoslavs (1,800), Poles (2,000), others (Chinese, Korean, Indian, Turkish, etc.) (4,000).

[82] Ulianov, "The October Revolution . . . ," p. 109.

[83] Béla Kun, in *Pravda,* Jan. 26, 1918.

[84] "Hungary, of course, is the country closest to Russia, not only geographically, but on account of the omnipotence of the reactionary landowners who have retained tremendous quantities of land from medieval times. . . . As you can see, this is not far removed from 'Mother Russia.' " V. I. Lenin, "Iron on Peasant Farms," *Works,* vol. 19, 4th ed., Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963, p. 310.

[85] The case of Finland, because of its timing and particular historic ties with Russia, can be considered as only of marginal relevance at this juncture.

foreign groups which rendered aid to Soviet Russia during the civil war, thus "furthering the cause of revolutionary internationalism."[86]

Lenin and the Soviet leaders were aware of at least the main outlines of the Entente's postwar plans in Eastern Europe and of the separatist aspirations of the Monarchy's national minorities. Lenin, like Wilson, was eager to "stir up nationalistic discontent" to weaken the Monarchy, but unlike Wilson, he was quite willing "to accept the extreme logic of this discontent . . . [that is] the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary."[87]

In view of Allied victories in the Middle East, the increasing involvement of the United States on the western front, and the successful Allied blockade on the sea, the eventual defeat of the Central Powers seemed inevitable—even allowing for possible counterattacks such as the Ludendorf offensive in the east and the battle of Marne in the west. Assuming that the defeat of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy entailed a full implementation of Point Ten of Wilson's Fourteen Points, in the spring of 1918 it was not difficult to foresee that chaos and political instability would ensue after the dismemberment of the Hapsburg Monarchy. From this it followed that the victors (Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia) and the vanquished (Germany, Austria, and Hungary) would be similarly vulnerable to Bolshevik propaganda designed to exploit the fluid situation and prepare the ground for a social revolution.

Germany, the "birthplace of socialism," was of paramount importance to the Russian leaders. Lenin and Trotsky believed that both the development of a socialist society in Russia and the beginning of the world revolution abroad depended upon a revolution in Germany. After Brest-Litovsk, however, Germany's military defeat was far less predictable than was the Monarchy's downfall. The Hapsburg Empire's lack of internal cohesion and the forces generated by its restless

[86] *Istoriia Grazhdanskoi Voiny v SSSR* [*History of the Civil War in the USSR*], vol. 3, Moscow: 1957, p. 223. Relevant Soviet historical studies in 1958–1959 tend to give "Chinese internationalists" a prominent place among foreigners aiding the Bolsheviks in the civil war. Cf. D. O. Danilovich, *Stranitsy Velikoi Druzhby: Uchastie Kitaiskikh Dobrovol'tsev na Frontakh Grazhdanskoi Voiny v Sovetskoi Rossii,* 1918–1922 [*Pages* [*from the story*] *of a Great Friendship: The Activities of Chinese Volunteers on Civil War Fronts in Russia*], Moscow: Izd-vo Sots.-Ekon.Lit-y., 1959.

[87] Woodrow Wilson's "War Aims and Peace Terms" of January, 1918, quoted in Alfred D. Low, "The Soviet Hungarian Republic and the Paris Peace Conference," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society,* New Series, vol. 53, part 10, Dec., 1963, p. 8.

and politically conscious national minorities made Hungary—in particular—the most likely candidate for major sociopolitical upheavals after the war.

Although, for understandable reasons, there is no documentary evidence to support this contention, we can safely assume that this process of selection of Hungary as the best potential host for the virus of social revolution might well have taken place during discussions among the Soviet and foreign communists in Moscow in the spring and summer of 1918. The fact of military defeat being equal, the "objective conditions" for a social revolution (industrialized society, polarized working class, and high degree of exploitation) were undoubtedly more favorable in Germany than in Hungary.[88] On the other hand, as the example of the Russian Revolution had proved, fortuitous "subjective conditions" for a revolution (dissatisfaction with the government, war weariness, pacifist propaganda, etc.), when properly exploited and escalated into an armed uprising by a purposeful political elite, were sufficient in themselves to bring about a social revolution.[89] Subjective conditions for a revolution in Hungary were present, even without taking the nationality issue into account. It may be surmised, therefore, that although the Russian leadership had never for a moment abandoned the priority accorded to the creation of a revolution in Germany, it had undertaken similar preparations for the Monarchy and the future successor states.

A Strategy of Social Revolution

Regardless of the position that Hungary might have occupied on the list of Russian revolutionary priorities abroad, such designs could not be realized without a translation of the Russian experience to Hungarian conditions. Thus the task for Kun and Szamuely was to draw on the lessons of Bolshevik strategy and tactics, to the extent that they were apparent six months after the October Revolution, to

[88]The terms of "subjective" and "objective" conditions for a revolution are used here in the general "Leninist sense" to define two preconditions for a revolutionary upheaval: "The people do not wish to live in the old way" (subjective condition), "the ruling classes cannot maintain their power any longer" (objective condition).

[89]Béla Kun struck a similar note in arguing his case for a revolution in Hungary: "The Hungarian Social Democrats, like the German Independent Socialists, do not consider that objective conditions for socialism are present in Hungary . . . [however] the class struggle of the poor is as important an objective factor as the [level] of capitalist development [of the economy in a given country]," Béla Kun, "Workers' Councils in Hungary," *Pravda,* Jan. 26, 1918.

retain the "revolutionary essence" and discard or modify inapplicable strategic solutions, and to render the Russian revolution "exportable" to Eastern Europe in general and Hungary in particular.

The Hungarian Group attempted to find a solution to this complex problem in three more or less simultaneous steps. First, through recruitment and indoctrination, efforts were made to create an ideologically integrated Hungarian Bolshevik revolutionary elite. Second, through intensification of written and oral agitation and propaganda among Hungarian prisoners of war, this elite undertook to recruit and train a highly politically conscious mass of "footsoldiers of the revolution" to serve in a future Communist Party of Hungary. The third task was to prepare a comprehensive revolutionary strategy and to elaborate on the outlines of a "Hungarian Bolshevik ideology" of proletarian revolution.

The main instruments of recruitment and training of activists were the Hungarian Group's agitator schools in Moscow and Omsk.[90] The Moscow school trained three types of activists: (1) former socialist organizers, either for executive positions in the Federation of Foreign Groups or—as it happened in Mátyás Rákosi's case—to be sent back to Hungary in the spring and summer of 1918; (2) former officers and noncommissioned officers, who were dispatched upon graduation to serve as commanders or political commissars in the Red Army's "internationalist" units; (3) those who had distinguished themselves in camp revolts, who were to be sent back to the camp as recruiters for the Red Army or kept in European Russia prior to returning to Hungary.[91]

The immediate purpose of agitator training was to provide a brief classroom program of Marxist education with emphasis on the Communist Manifesto.[92] In addition to daily classroom discussions,

[90] There are two useful accounts on life in the Hungarian agitator school in Moscow: Lajos Német, "Küldetésben Leninnél [Meeting Lenin]," in Szerémi (ed.), *Heroic Times . . .*, p. 123; and Gisztl, "Reminiscences . . . ," p. 183.

[91] *Ibid.*, p. 182.

[92] Program of studies in the agitator school of the Hungarian section, Revolutionary Society of Internationalist Soldiers, Workers, and Peasants (Omsk). The eight-week course, four to five hours a day, proposed to cover the following themes: state, imperialism, the church, the army, Marxism, political economy, the agrarian question, the development of capitalism, the Russian Revolution, the role of workers, peasants, and intellectuals in the social revolution, the dictatorship of the proletariat, money and the dictatorship of the proletariat, the means of production and transportation under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the schools of the future, the arts of the future, communism. Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, p. 115.

each student, under the "supervision of an experienced comrade, . . . went to places near and far, wherever prisoners of war worked, took part in . . . meetings, . . . and carried on political agitation and propaganda. . . ."[93] The Moscow school's primary purpose was made explicit in its report for September, 1918: "We are not training fancy orators but deeply convinced sincere fighters for communism who . . . are fully knowledgeable of the straight [Party] line of class struggle, even when awakened from sleep. . . ."[94]

Although estimates vary, we may assume that by November, 1918, about five hundred Hungarian socialists had received their training from these two schools and several local seminars. Many graduates of the Moscow and Omsk schools served in Russia as commanders of special internationalist units. They willingly executed such Chekist assignments as the suppression of the July 6 left social revolutionary uprising in Moscow, the enforcement of "the law on state grain monopoly," the preventive detention of kulaks and suspected counterrevolutionaries, and similar terroristic measures.[95] Leaders of this Bolshevik Praetorian guard successfully passed the ultimate test of "proletarian internationalism" in yet another respect. According to Hungarian communist military historians, "the internationalist units were deployed usually as assault troops. This inevitably caused a high rate of attrition."[96] Thus it appears that members of the Hungarian elite, "the graduates of the October Revolution," having mastered the "best features of the Bolshevik revolutionary practice," had indeed been well trained to carry the torch of "international proletarian revolution" back to their homeland at a propitious time.

The second prerequisite for the successful translation of the Russian revolutionary experience was the creation of a politically indoctrinated mass of Hungarian soldiers in Russia who would re-

[93] Gisztl, "Reminiscences . . . ," p. 183.

[94] "A Magyar Kommunista Csoport Munkája [The Hungarian Group's Activities]," *Szociális Forradalom* (Moscow), no. 51, Sept. 21, 1918, in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .* , vol. 5, pp. 116–117.

[95] Gratz, *Bolshevism . . .* , p. 69; and Györkei, "Data on . . . ," p. 43. An article in *Pravda,* Dec. 29, 1918, indignantly rejected Social Revolutionary accusations concerning the "use of Hungarian, Chinese, and Latvian bayonets" for Bolshevik terrorist purposes. For true tales of heroic and near-heroic exploits of Hungarian "Red internationalists" see reminiscences of Sándor Sziklai, Dezső Faragó, Gyula Varga, and Sándor Böjtös in Györkei, *Hungarian Internationalists . . .* , pp. 232–237, 252–265, 266–269, 293–303.

[96] Györkei "Data on . . . ," p. 64. See also Kun's rejoinder to Hungarian socialist charges that called Hungarian "internationalist" Red Army men "trench-fillers" for the Bolsheviks; Béla Kun, "Still, We Will Fight," *Pravda,* Aug. 7, 1918.

turn to Hungary and spread the Bolshevik message at the grass-roots level. This task was undertaken by the Hungarian Group's chief tactician, Tibor Szamuely, in the columns of *Szociális Forradalom*.[97] Szamuely's articles were distinguished by their uniform style and identical conclusions, regardless of the topic—a style which may be characterized as Hungarian yellow journalism at its bloodthirsty best.[98]

Since Szamuely wrote for soldiers, his barrage of vitriolic invectives and down-to-earth metaphors achieved precisely the same result as the revolutionary socialist leaflets in Hungary. His inflammatory articles urged homesick soldiers to take revenge on everyone who was pointed out to them as responsible for the war and for the miseries of the families at home.[99] Whether he was commenting on government crises in Vienna, prodding Hungarian Red Army men not to desert their "internationalist" units, or deriding the cowardice of the Hungarian socialist bureaucrats, he invariably concluded his piece in a Catoesque ". . . ceterum censeo ut imperium Hungariae esse delendam. . . ." This singleminded preoccupation with the necessity of a social revolution in Hungary was aptly expressed in his exhortation to a group of Hungarian prisoners of war about to leave for home:[100]

> Go home and take this reminder with you!
>
> The proletariat has only one enemy, and that is capital; the proletariat has no country, and therefore he has nothing to defend; the proletariat has only one duty: to fight against its oppressors and exploiters . . . [and above all] against imperialism, which is the source of all your sufferings and fears.
>
> Go home, but do not take on the yoke of imperialism and serve under arms to kill your brothers again. With weapons the tyrants' power will be in

97 Between April and November, 1918, Szamuely published twenty articles in *Szociális Forradalom*, the official biweekly of the Hungarian Group in Moscow. Seven of these articles are reproduced in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol.5 pp. 105, 113–114, 241–244, 247–249, 259–261, 264–265, 278–280, and thirteen appear in Szamuely, *Alarm*, pp. 55–143.

98 Before the war Szamuely was a contributor to the small Budapest news sheet *Financial World*, which specialized in sensational exposes, murky stock-promotion schemes, and blackmail in general. Szamuely apparently never rid himself of the gutter language he had acquired at this paper. Cf. Oszkár Fodor, "Szamuely Tibor Ismeretlen Cikkei [Some Unknown Articles by Tibor Szamuely]," *Magyar Könyvszemle*, vol. 79, nos. 1–2, January–June, 1962, p. 109.

99 Phrases such as "dying old folks," "starving children," and "wife (or sister) driven to prostitution" were standard weapons in Bolshevik propaganda leaflets in describing the situation in Hungary. Cf. "Hazatérőkhöz [To Those Who Are Returning to Hungary]," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, nos. 3–4, 1957, pp. 66–67.

100 Tibor Szamuely, "Vagy-Vagy [Either-Or]," *Szociális Forradalom* (Moscow), no. 13, May 22, 1918, in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, pp. 113–114.

your hands. . . . Never forget that one can and must use this power. The Russian example is before you; let us learn it well!

He who does not become a soldier of the revolution either here [in Russia] or at home is not with us—he is our enemy. We must wage merciless struggle against these enemies and punish them by sending them back to Hungary!

The road to revolution is clear, simple, and direct. Proletarian revolutionaries, forward march!

As a result of an informal division of labor within the Hungarian Group, it fell to Béla Kun to prepare an overall strategy and to establish the salient features of a Hungarian-Bolshevik ideology, and thus to fulfill the third prerequisite of transferring the Russian Revolution to Hungary. He acquitted himself of this task in the form of several articles in *Pravda* and four Hungarian-language pamphlets published in Russia between May and October, 1918.[101]

Kun's arguments were essentially concerned with the inevitability of a social revolution in Hungary and with the techniques of a revolution and the tasks of the victorious proletariat in the period of transition to socialism. Following Trotsky's similar reasoning, he maintained that the Russian revolution could not be kept isolated in one country, but would spread to a defeated Germany and would soon engulf Europe.[102] Hungary, where "subjective conditions" for a revolution were assumed to be present, would not avoid this fate.[103] Harbingers of a forthcoming revolution in Hungary—the establishment of workers' councils, mass desertions from the official socialist party and from the army, and general strikes—led Kun to conclude that Hungary's problems could not be solved by reformist socialist or bourgeois parliamentary means.[104] He also hinted at the possibility

[101] Béla Kun's articles in *Pravda* were published on Jan. 26, April 26, 28, May 1, 4, 11, 15, 24, June 1, 2, 8, 22, 27, July 4, 13, 24, and Aug. 4, 1918. Several of these are included in Béla Kun, *Revolutionary Essays* (reprinted from *Pravda*), London: B[ritish] S[ocialist] P[arty], 1919(?). The pamphlets consulted were *Mit Akarnak a Kommunisták?* [*What Do the Communists Want?*], 3rd Hungarian ed., Budapest: A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, 1919; *Kié a Föld?* [*To Whom Does the Land Belong?*], 4th Hungarian ed., Budapest: A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, 1919; *Ki Fizet a Háborúért?* [*Who Pays for the War?*], 4th Hungarian ed., Budapest: A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, 1919; *Mi a Tanácsköztársaság?* [*What is the Soviet Republic?*], 2nd Hungarian ed., Moscow: A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, 1919.

[102] Béla Kun, "A New Center of Infection," *Pravda,* April 26, 1918.

[103] Béla Kun, "Workers' Councils in Hungary," *Pravda,* Jan. 26, 1918.

[104] Béla Kun, "The Revolutionary Tide in Austria," *Pravda,* June 8, 1918; "The Birth Pains of the Revolution," *Pravda,* June 27, 1918; and "Revolution in Hungary," *Pravda,* July 4, 1918.

of a two-stage revolution, with the first stage "nationalistic and anti-German" in character, representing the unanimous sentiments of the Hungarian lower middle class, and the second stage combining sentiments of nationalism with the revolutionary sweep of the proletariat to create a social revolution.[105]

In terms of overall strategy, Kun's "blueprint" for revolution provided for four successive steps: (1) Mass strikes of starving and war-weary workers that would have to be suppressed with arms by the bourgeois government. (2) This, "according to the lessons of the Russian revolutionary movement," would be followed by a gradual deterioration of governmental authority and a "disintegration of discipline in the army, which is made up of masses of urban and rural workers," leading ultimately to an armed uprising. (3) Next, the armed proletariat would occupy the state and destroy its bureaucracy and launch a social revolution. (4) This process, when completed, would be manifested in the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.[106]

In the first period of its dictatorship, the victorious proletariat should implement two sets of economic and political tasks. Kun's economic program called for a full-scale nationalization of the means of production "to control production," and through rationing "the elimination of commerce" [*sic*], and hence "the control of consumption." "Unlike the so-called reformers in Hungary who talk about distributing the land—which would not be anything but getting into a lifelong burden of indebtedness—we shall occupy the land in the revolutionary way: through the local soviets of workers' and peasants' deputies."[107] As a comprehensive political program, he offered the recently adopted 1918 constitution of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic as a guideline for a future Hungarian proletarian republic.[108]

Perhaps to make the strange Hungarian translation of Russian legal terminology more palatable, Kun permitted the "typical Hungarian prisoner of war" to raise some obvious questions:

[105] Béla Kun, "A School of Social Revolution," *Pravda*, May 15, 1918. The most puzzling aspect of this formula of "nationalism *cum* revolutionary fervor" is that it could have saved the Hungarian Soviet Republic had it been implemented during the first six weeks of communist-socialist rule. This theme, however, was never to reappear in Kun's published writings.

[106] Kun, *What Do the Communists Want?*

[107] Kun, *To Whom Does the Land Belong?*

[108] Kun, *What Is the Soviet Republic?*

> I do not want this revolution and I do not care for the freedom they have in Russia. . . . There is no legislature . . . and the right to vote for which the Russian workers had fought has been destroyed by the Bolsheviks. . . . There is tremendous disorder in Russia. There is no freedom of the press, the prisons are full, there are riots everywhere, and the entire country looks like a besieged fortress.

In reply Kun offered his annotated version of the new Russian constitution and a point-by-point refutation of these and similar objections which had gained currency among Hungarian prisoner-of-war activists. He concluded: "Not voting rights, but the acquisition of power, should be written on the flag of the working class! . . . We have arms in our hands. . . . We are ready to take power; therefore, let us declare: we shall create a soviet republic in Hungary!"[109]

By the end of October, 1918, it was evident that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy would collapse in a matter of weeks. Having accomplished a major share of the group's threefold program, the Hungarian Bolsheviks began preparations for transferring their operations to Hungary. These activities climaxed in the Hungarian Group's conferences of October 25 and November 4, held in the Hotel Dresden in Moscow.[110] According to the decision of the November 4 conference, the Hungarian Group transformed itself into the Communist Party of Hungary.[111] The new party recognized the Russian Communist Party as its international representative and resolved to submit itself to the "general political line" of the Russian party's resolutions and decisions. Thus the deed was done; the Communist Party of Hungary was founded on Russian soil.

During the first ten months of 1918 Hungarian and other foreign socialist prisoner groups in Russia amply justified Bolshevik expectations of their immediate military value (on behalf of the new regime) and potential political value (as "bacilli" of revolutions abroad). In the spring of that year, foreign-socialist-manned internationalist units were used exclusively for military purposes, mainly on the Ukrainian and southern fronts. By early June, thanks to the

[109] *Ibid.*

[110] Excerpts from Kun's speeches delivered at both sessions and the resolution of the latter meeting are given in Appendix D.

[111] György Milei, "Az OK(b)P Magyar Csoportja a KMP Megalakulásáért 1918 Október–November: Dokumentumok [The Hungarian Group of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) for the Formation of the Communist Party of Hungary in October–November 1918: Annotated Documents]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 2, 1964, pp. 160–171.

"breathing spell" granted by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, the Bolshevik leaders had a chance to launch indoctrination programs for handpicked foreign socialists to be dispatched to prepare the ground for a social revolution abroad, for former professional officers to lead Red Army and/or internationalist units in the defense of the Russian revolution, and for thousands of enlisted men awaiting shipment to their homelands.

Bolshevik priorities concerning the deployment of foreign socialists never wavered in these months: first came the defense of Russia, and only second came the cause of revolution abroad. As a result, until early October all Hungarian prisoner-of-war activists (with the exception of students at the agitator school) were preoccupied with essentially internal Russian tasks such as antikulak raids, riot control after a Social Revolutionary insurrection in Moscow, and as members of assault units on the fronts of the civil war. Only when the White pressure had eased somewhat, and the defeat of the Central Powers appeared imminent, was it considered possible to release about 5 to 10 per cent of the Hungarian manpower deployed on the Bolshevik side of the war, to encourage the formation of a communist party, and to facilitate their return to Hungary as a unit committed to the establishment of a revolutionary beachhead in their native land. It is important to emphasize that the Bolsheviks saw to it that the departure of these would-be revolution makers would not impair either the military usefulness or the political consciousness of the Hungarian internationalists who were left in Russia. Rudnyánszky took over the Federation of Foreign Groups from Kun, the Hungarian Group was replaced by the Hungarian Communist Committee Abroad (a seven-man group), and the internationalist units were entrusted to new graduates of the Moscow agitator school.[112]

Kun and his comrades had gained much from their Russian revolutionary experience in preparation for their self-appointed tasks in Hungary. They had experienced at first hand the results of an armed uprising—the fact that a government can be overthrown and socialization launched. They had become familiar with Bolshevik strategy and tactics at all levels and, through close association with Lenin, Bukharin, and Sverdlov, with the overall dynamics and tactical details of the Soviet design for a world revolution. Whether they had indeed learned the "lessons of October" and mastered the Rus-

[112]For additional data on the Moscow-based Committee Abroad (or Foreign Bureau) of the Communist Party of Hungary see Appendix D.

sian Communist Party's revolutionary techniques neither Lenin nor Kun could answer in early November of 1918. This much, however, was apparent at that time: the forces of the Hungarian socialist opposition which had parted ways in 1914 and had branched into groups of engineer socialists, anarchosyndicalists, and revolutionary socialists in Hungary and Hungarian Bolshevik internationalists in Russia were about to reunite. From this synthesis the Communist Party of Hungary and, four months later, the Hungarian Soviet Republic were to emerge.

Chapter 4

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION AND THE FOUNDING OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF HUNGARY

The Hungarian war cabinet fell in the last week of October, 1918. In anticipation of the country's subsequent secession from the Monarchy, Count Mihály Károlyi, the leader of the parliamentary opposition, Oszkár Jászi, the head of the Radical Bourgeois Party, and Zsigmond Kunfi and Ernő Garami of the socialist executive began preparation for the formation of a democratic government in Hungary.[1] These efforts were aided by the newly formed Hungarian National Council and the Budapest Workers' Council, and derived moral support from the masses on the streets of Budapest demonstrating under slogans of peace and national self-determination.

After days of maneuvering King Karl IV was forced to concede, and on November 1 he appointed a cabinet made up of the former opposition under the premiership of Károlyi.[2] The events that preceded the ascendancy of the new government to power—later called the Autumn Rose Revolution[3]—were the most important political phenomena to take place in Hungary since the revolution of 1848. With the military defeat and territorial disintegration of the Hapsburg Monarchy, for the first time since 1848 there seemed to be a genuine opportunity for Hungary to rid itself of all legal and constitutional obstacles of the past and to catch up with the political realities of the twentieth century. The fall of the old regime also opened up possibilities for rectifying the gross mistakes and criminal intolerance which had been perpetrated by Hungarian politicians toward the other nationality groups of Hungary since the Compromise of 1867 and for implementing many social, cultural, and economic reform

[1] Oscar Jászi, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary,* London: King and Son, Ltd., 1924, chaps. 2, 3.

[2] For Károlyi's version of his negotiations with the King and with members of his cabinet see Mihály Károlyi, *Egy Egész Világ Ellen* [*Against the Entire World*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1965, chaps. 33, 34.

[3] Little chrysanthemums [*őszi rózsa*], or "autumn roses," of which there were great supplies in town for the coming All Saints' Day, were worn in the lapels of demonstrators and soldiers during those days. The epithet also was to connote the bloodless character of the October events in Hungary.

proposals which had been long and unsuccessfully advocated by socialists, agrarian radicals, and middle-class reformers.

Certain aspects of the revolutionary changes were most encouraging for the survival of the new regime amidst the ruins of postwar Hungary. The traditional ruling groups had been caught by surprise by the loss of the war and by Austria's inability to uphold the status quo in Hungarian politics, and as a result, the transfer of power from the bankrupt war cabinet to Károlyi's coalition government took place without large-scale violence or an armed uprising. The street demonstrations organized by the Hungarian National Council, the Budapest Soldiers' Council, the Budapest Workers' Council, and various radical student groups under the aegis of the Galileo Circle were conducted with a political maturity and sense of purpose that indicated the fruits of many years of quiet organizational and educational work designed to become operative in precisely such a relatively peaceful "bourgeois-democratic revolution." In the days preceding the political takeover it had become apparent that the chasm separating the "political nation" and the rest of the people was too deep and too wide to be bridged by promises and minor concessions; the need for immediate and far-reaching measures thus provided the new government with a broad mandate to carry out the demands of its hopeful supporters.

The Balance of Power in the Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution

With a peaceful transfer of power, equitable representation of a previously disenfranchised majority through the soldiers' and workers' councils, and the establishment of a government by the former opposition, it appeared in November of 1918 that all the working ingredients of a bourgeois-democratic revolution were present in Hungary. However, the very circumstances that made the revolution possible and opened vistas of a better future also included a set of conditions that threatened to negate the new regime's freedom of action in carrying out its mandate. The Monarchy's military defeat had left Hungary vulnerable to a combined Rumanian, Czechoslovak, Serbian, and French invasion. The new government had no choice but to face the consequences of the misdeeds of its intensely hated predecessors in connection with the just and unjust territorial, political, economic, and military demands of Hungary's former national minorities, now masters of their own fate in the newly created

Successor States.[4] On Nov. 13, 1918, Károlyi was obliged to sign an armistice agreement which divested Hungary of about half her former territory.[5]

The immediate economic situation was more menacing than the territorial losses engendered by the armistice agreement. Winter was approaching, and only one-fifth of the coal mines fell within the new boundaries. Cities were starving while grain was rotting in the countryside; railroads were occupied by troops returning from the front or were confiscated by the Entente. Textiles and footwear were in short supply, yet no plans for the reconversion of factories to civilian production had been formulated. Food riots broke out in working-class districts, returning war veterans looted stores, and angry peasants set many mansions afire. Fifty-one months of war and physical deprivation had begun to take their toll. To cope with external pressures and domestic chaos the new government needed the unqualified support of all prospective beneficiaries of a democracy in Hungary. This included the cooperation of the old state administration on both the central and local levels. Indeed, the government's first program was drafted with the hope of universal appeal, designed to accommodate everyone but the insignificant ultraconservative minority.[6]

The Károlyi cabinet was made up of representatives of three political groups: the former parliamentary-opposition Károlyi party, the extraparliamentary Radical Bourgeois Party (headed by Jászi), and the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.[7] The first two of these

[4] For an interesting analysis of the policies and territorial demands of the Successor States on the Republic of Hungary see Alfred D. Low, *The Soviet Hungarian Republic and the Paris Peace Conference*, Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1963, pp. 16–26.

[5] The text of the Belgrade Armistice may be found in Francis Deak, *Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1942, pp. 359–362.

[6] The main provisions were national independence, new electoral laws, freedom of the press, right to trial by jury, freedom of speech and assembly, establishment of ministries of labor and public welfare, and radical land reform "to benefit the great masses." The question of a republican form of government was not resolved until November 16, when the National Council pressured the government into declaring Hungary's complete independence from Austria and the dethronement of the Hapsburg dynasty. Cf. "Minutes of the Council of Ministers, Oct. 31, 1918," in Mrs. Sándor Gábor *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 5, Nov. 7, 1917–March 21, 1919, Budapest: Szikra, 1956, p. 299.

[7] Ernő Garami was named Minister of Commerce and Zsigmond Kunfi Minister of Public Education. Sándor Garbai and Dezső Bokányi were given two lesser posts, Director of Public Housing and Director of State Propaganda.

groups accorded Károlyi general respect and sympathy for his courageous opposition to the war cabinet, but aside from control of two influential newspaper in Budapest, they had no national organization, paid-up membership, or organized support of any kind. Since these middle-class reformers were also completely lacking in any governing or administrative experience, they were forced to fall back on the benevolent neutrality of the old state bureaucracy and the patriotic officers of the army. Consequently, it was left to the socialists to provide organized mass support and, through the workers' councils, to actually enforce the measures of the new government.

The situation was further aggravated by the polarization of political power within the country. Between October 30 and November 16 there were four administrative authorities in Budapest (which, for all practical purposes, meant all of Hungary): the coalition government, the Hungarian National Council, the Budapest Soldiers' Council, and the Budapest Workers' Council. The National Council, run by an executive committee, was made up of progressive intellectuals, radical clergymen, leaders of radical bourgeois and socialist parties, and delegates from the trade unions, soldiers' councils, and "free associations."[8] The Soldiers' Council was led by a few ambitious junior officers and the maverick József Pogány, former war correspondent of *Népszava*. The most powerful of the four, the Workers' Council, was, in effect, an enlarged Hungarian Social Democratic Party congress—fully controlled by the party executive and the Trade Union Council.

The fact that each of these organizations exercised authority overlapping the functions of the other three created an ambiguous situation. The government derived its authority from the National Council and claimed to speak for the entire nation. The Soldiers' Council had the men and weapons, while the Workers' Council—which also had an armed auxiliary (the People's Guard)—was the only body capable of coordinated and effective action. Although the socialists had only two ministers in the cabinet, they actually directed the Workers' Council, had a decisive voice in the Soldiers' Council, and controlled a sizable number of delegates in the National Council.[9]

[8] "Free associations" were economic interest groups of nonunion white-collar workers, professionals, writers, artists, and several miscellaneous professions such as demobilized noncommissioned officers.

[9] The executive committees of the National Council, the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, the Soldiers' Council, and the government agreed to strip the Workers' Council of its administrative functions. "Executive Power Is in the Hands of the Government," *Népszava,* Nov. 5, 1918.

At this juncture the socialist leaders had two alternatives. The party united nearly a million organized workers; it had the power to put pressure on the government, to arm the workers, and to embark on a large-scale socialist program, including the socialization of major industries and comprehensive labor and welfare legislation, or had the option of remaining a nominal minority in the cabinet, supporting the government's limited reform program, and trying to ensure through the Workers' Council and the National Council that socialist goals would be implemented in due course. By November 5 it became clear that the party was not prepared to strike out on its own, but had chosen to remain an inferior partner in the new governmental structure.

Although the Hungarian Social Democratic Party voluntarily declined to assert its actual power, ingredients of a "dual-power" situation were nevertheless present in Hungary. The government alone was recognized as the lawful international representative of Hungary, but it could not implement a single major decision—domestic or foreign—without the tacit or expressed consent of the socialists. Although Károlyi's personality commanded the respect of the entire country, his real power lay with the unorganized rural intelligentsia and the urban middle classes, but socialists indirectly controlled the city administration through the local workers' councils and actually managed the industrial and mining sections of northern Hungary. For the majority of soldiers returning from the war the government was the only legitimate holder of authority, but the "army" of organized workers, nearly a million strong, mistrusted a government of aristocrats and bourgeois philosophers and sought guidance from their trusted leaders. It was up to Károlyi and Barna Búza, his popular Minister of Agriculture, to convince owners of large estates and small farms to sell their grain to the cities, but only the trade unions could ensure continued production of consumer goods, fuel supplies, and uninterrupted transportation for both the city and the country. Finally, while the government of the defeated country had extremely limited opportunities to reestablish its foreign relations, the party, with its traditional contacts at international socialist forums, had a fair chance to plead the case for Hungarian democracy abroad with the socialist parties of the Entente.

These aspects of political and economic interdependence of the socialists and the government were reliable indicators of the post-October internal balance of power. A restricted sphere of action and constant compromise on both sides were deemed to be the only work-

able solution. The socialists were most anxious to shed the epithet of "scoundrels without a country"—a scornful reminder of the international nature of the socialist cause and, by implication, of the party's lack of patriotism—and eagerly cooperated with Károlyi. Károlyi, equally anxious to divorce his government from the antilabor image long associated with his conservative predecessors, did his utmost to accommodate any reasonable socialist demand presented to him. The essence of the socialist-bourgeois compromise program may best be illustrated by Oszkár Jászi's letter to Károlyi concerning the immediate program of the democratic coalition:[10]

> The task of the government, in view of the dual danger of counterrevolution and anarchy, can be only its firm adherence to policies of radicalism . . . [and] the realization of all those demands of the broad masses which are feasible under Hungary's present level of economic and intellectual development. This should include full political democracy, the splitting up of the latifundia through taxation, the establishment of a system of voluntary cooperatives, nationalization of enterprises that are no longer controlled by individual initiative, and in [privately owned] factories a just sharing of profits among the state, workers, and owners and the fullest social protection of workers. Thus, the *viable and feasible* substance of socialism must be realized now, just as terror and coercion must be avoided.

This balancing of interests would have been precarious even under peaceful conditions, and in those chaotic months of 1918 Hungary's domestic and political atmosphere was not conducive to the acceptance of compromise as a valid part of the political process. The bourgeois-socialist coalition was a one-sided bargain in at least one respect: although the party brought much-needed mass support to Károlyi and his radical colleagues, the unwritten stipulations of the alliance left the executive most vulnerable to criticism from the party's left wing. Clearly, there was a contradiction between the extent of the party's participation in the government and its unqualified commitment to Károlyi's and Jászi's bourgeois-democratic program. The attitude among Hungarian socialists, to whom flexibility amounted to treason, was that the party had only two rightful options in a democratic revolution: it was either to remain in opposition or to rule alone and institute a dictatorship of the proletariat. The turn

[10] Quoted in György Fukász, *A Magyarországi Polgári Radikalizmus Történetéhez, 1900–1918: Jászi Oszkár Ideologiájának Birálata* [*On the History of Bourgeois Radicalism in Hungary: A Critique of Oszkár Jászi's Ideology*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1960, pp. 73–74.

of events left many an "enlisted man" dismayed and unable to understand the new strategy of the "party generals," some of whose well-meant stands unwittingly contributed to the rise of leftist cries of betrayal. For example, Kunfi, one of the socialist members of the Károlyi cabinet, called for a "six-week suspension of class struggle" to avoid adding to the growing pains of the new democracy.

The dual-power situation that emerged in the wake of the October revolution in Hungary was similar in many respects to the one following the February revolution in Russia. The Hungarian socialists, lacking actual governing experience and strategy preparations for such an eventuality, chose to support and participate in Károlyi's democratic government. With this step they accepted limited partnership but full liability for a bourgeois reform platform, proving themselves good patriots but poor Marxists. The party's restraint in pressing for realization of its recently radicalized program made it appear to have suddenly relinquished to its newly befriended bourgeois allies the well-deserved fruits of its fifty-year-long struggle. This partly expedient, partly selfless subordination of working-class interests to those of the nation sowed seeds of dissension within the socialist ranks and greatly handicapped the leadership in its efforts to enforce party discipline among the dissenters.

Consolidation of the Socialist Opposition

The crisis atmosphere that had prompted the moderate resolutions of the Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in early October of 1918 evoked an entirely different response from the suddenly resurgent leftist opposition groups. A subtle dialogue developed between the center and the left. The majority socialists pressed for an independent Hungary within the framework of the Monarchy: the leftists clamored for a republic of the people. While the party cautiously began to explore its way toward a peaceful transition from war to peace, the opposition resorted to political assassinations and started to plot an armed uprising. The socialist executive urged working-class unity in face of the impending crisis, but the extremists feverishly organized every past, present, and potential dissident to overthrow the reformist leadership. The memory of many defeated strikes and of seeming acquiescence to wartime wage freezes, and most recently, the apparent abandonment of the militant shop stewards who had been forcibly inducted into the army after the June strikes, shook the faith of many socialist activists

in their party's ability to assert itself in behalf of the proletariat.

The first sign of rank-and-file distrust of the executive's conduct in the revolution appeared in the form of a "Manifesto to the Proletariat of Hungary" issued in early November by the "Group of Independent Socialists." The pamphlet called for the establishment of a "pure socialist republic . . . where there will be no privilege, exploitation, and lords and servants, but everyone will be workers and there will be only one employer, the community of citizens—*the State!!*"[11] The independents regarded the revolution as "nationalistic [and] partly antimilitaristic, rather than socialist," liberating the state but not the working people. "Our road begins only where the republican, nationalist, and other bourgeois parties—having achieved their goals—call for a halt." The manifesto demanded a complete break with the bourgeoisie, the distribution of all lands, introduction of compulsory labor, "distribution of income according to socially useful production," and the creation of a communist republic through the institution of "proletarian terror."[12]

The activities of other leftist opposition groups can best be described as a study in irresolute frustration. Revolutionary socialists, engineer socialists, and syndicalists were systematically excluded by the socialist executive both from the Hungarian National Council and the Budapest Workers' Council.[13] Hampered by inherent organizational weaknesses and lacking both mass support and legitimate channels of operation, these conspiratorial societies (which had flourished under police suppression) were relegated to the impotent fringes of public life.

Unable to operate within the party, the revolutionary socialists appointed themselves the "keepers of the conscience of the revolution," determined to maintain a close watch for any sign of betrayal of proletarian interests by the majority socialists. Ottó Korvin's chance to prove the indispensability of his revolutionary socialist

[11] Heavily edited excerpts from the pamphlet are given in Gábor, *Selected Documents* . . . , vol. 5, pp. 310–311. Members of the socialist opposition of 1910–1914 vintage (Dezső Somló, Rezső Rajczy) and a few powerful chief shop stewards from the Csepel munitions works (Lajos Sikorszky and Sándor Ösztreicher) apparently tried to emulate in Hungary the successful example of the German Independent Social Democratic Party.

[12] The independents held their first meeting on November 15 and subsequently joined the Communist Party. Near the end of the Hungarian Soviet Republic this group reemerged as a would-be terrorist organization planning to liquidate the Budapest bourgeoisie *en masse*.

[13] It was only in the Budapest Soldiers' Council that the revolutionary socialists and a few leftist socialists could gain a foothold.

group came in early November. Sverdlov, on behalf of the Russian government, had sent a telegram of greetings to the people of Hungary, calling for a republic of workers' and soldiers' councils in Hungary, international class war against the Entente, an alliance between the proletariat of Russia and the peoples of the former Monarchy, and the establishment of a "World Soviet Republic." The party at first decided to suppress Sverdlov's inflammatory message,[14] but Korvin obtained a copy through one of his agents at the wireless relay station and produced several thousand leaflets containing excerpts from it. Through a contact in the Soldiers' Council, he obtained an airplane and had the leaflets dropped into the midst of a mass meeting celebrating the inauguration of Hungary's new republican form of government.[15] The meeting, held before the parliament building, had started as a socialist victory celebration; according to contemporary nonsocialist news reports, this coup dampened the festive mood considerably.

With the temporary consolidation of the revolution, the socialist opposition began to reactivate itself on a larger scale. Jenő László, Béla Vágó, and Béla Szántó invited fifty representatives of the old socialist opposition, the antimilitarists, the revolutionary socialists, the engineer socialists, and the factory stewards to a secret meeting scheduled for November 17.[16] All were in agreement on condemnation of the party executive for its failure to form a purely socialist government and for cooperating with representatives of the bourgeoisie. Apparently only Rudas and the former prisoner-of-war Bolshevik participants in the meetings were in favor of an organizational separation from the reformist majority. The deadlocked arguments were finally settled when someone proposed the formation of an "Ervin Szabó Circle,"[17] a political club within the party dedicated

[14] The text of Sverdlov's telegram was first published in *Pravda,* Nov. 3, 1918, and after considerable delay, in *Népszava,* Nov. 20, 1918. Justification for the suppression of the telegram was made by Weltner, the editor of *Népszava.* Jakab Weltner, *Forradalom, Bolsevizmus, Emigrácio* [*Revolution, Bolshevism, Emigration*], Budapest: Weltner, 1929, p. 75.

[15] The text of the leaflet appears in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol., p. 345.

[16] For details of this meeting see György Milei, "A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja Megalakulásának Történetéhez [On the History of the Foundation of the Communist Party in Hungary]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 4, 1958, pp. 57–58.

[17] Ervin Szabó died at the end of September, 1918. He did not live to see the October revolution, nor was he able to respond to the news of his appointment to an honorary membership in the Socialist Academy in Moscow. For a contemporary socialist evaluation of Szabó's work see Zsigmond Kunfi, "Ervin Szabó," *Népszava,* Oct. 2, 1918.

to fighting for the radicalization of socialist policies, exposing the executive's "opportunistic actions," and exploring ways of developing the currently stagnant situation into a genuine socialist revolution.[18]

The Founding of the Communist Party of Hungary

With this sudden flurry of factionalist activities in the socialist ranks, Béla Kun could not have arrived at a more opportune time. Representatives of the various opposition groups were unable to produce new ideas for exploiting the executive's weaknesses to their own ends, and did not have a commonly recognized leader to mold their scattered forces into a meaningfully different socialist party. However, they were not entirely unprepared to make a break with the party if there appeared to be a real chance to wrestle away the leadership from Garami, Kunfi, and their colleagues. Thanks to the sensational Budapest press, Kun, who had been a fifth-rank socialist functionary in one of the provincial towns before the war, had acquired during the past year an awesome reputation in Hungarian socialist circles as one of the outstanding figures of the Russian Revolution. In terms of engineering an intraparty split, he accomplished more in the three days after his return from Russia than the entire socialist opposition had accomplished in as many years.[19]

Communist historians at their uncompromising best have argued that the establishment of a communist party in Hungary was a historic necessity in the fall of 1918.[20] It is probably true that, given the coexistence of an essentially reformist majority socialist strategy and the rapidly growing radicalism of the masses (a necessarily skeletal picture of the dynamics of the situation), the total pressure of the Hungarian left would sooner or later have crystallized into one or more distinct parties or partylike formations. This, moreover, would have taken place without the imported wisdom and organizational talents of Béla Kun. In such a case, however, there would have been

[18] In the meantime the independent socialists were about to form a "Marx Circle," a similar debating society that was to remain outside the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.

[19] For a detailed description of Kun's activities between his arrival and the first conference of the Communist Party of Hungary see excerpts from Kun's memoirs in Appendix E.

[20] This view is most prominently represented in Tibor Szamuely, *A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártjának Megalakulása és Harca a Proletárdiktaturáért* [*The Communist Party of Hungary: Its Formation and Struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1964, pp. 188–200.

an anarchist, syndicalist, technocratic, or an avant-garde artist *Prolet-kult* type of conglomeration, rather than a centralized, ideologically coherent vanguard of the working class committed to prepare for and actually carry out a proletarian revolution.

Béla Kun offered the socialist dissenters a comprehensive action program for social revolution, a persuasive account of the tested principles and methods that had helped Lenin win and consolidate the Russian proletarian revolution, a new type of workers' party as a clear-cut organizational alternative to the timid and ineffectual political-club type of approach intended to "expose and defeat the traitors of the proletariat," and ample funds to facilitate the organizational and propaganda activities of his proposed Communist Party of Hungary.[21]

Kun was faced with an extremely difficult task in engineering a split among the socialists. Despite the immediate opportunities presented by their party's vulnerable alliance policy, working-class unity had always been a cardinal tenet of socialist movements throughout Europe. The faithful observation of this principle had been particularly important for the Hungarian party, which owed its very existence to the fact that it had successfully repelled every bourgeois plot against its unity during the past three decades. The history of the intraparty opposition—beginning with Ervin Szabó, the Karl Marx Society of 1908, and Alpári's adventures—was one of defeated dissenters and a victorious executive. Many would-be rebels also recognized that without a fully united workers' party even the modest achievements of October would be in jeopardy.

Kun resorted to a wide range of persuasive techniques to overcome these difficulties. His basic argument, as one could glean from his articles of October 31 and November 1 in *Pravda* and from his speech at the Hotel Dresden on November 4, concentrated on the

[21] According to an indictment prepared by the Public Prosecutor's Office in March, 1919, when the Communist Party was temporarily outlawed, Kun had arrived in Budapest with a sum of 240,000 or 340,000 crowns. This information was said to have been obtained from a member of the party's central committee, György Nánássy, who was later allegedly executed by a communist terror squad for his treasonous conduct. For excerpts from the indictment see Márta B. Szinkovich, "Két Dokumentum a Tanácsköztársaság Előzményeiről [Two Documents on the Background of the Soviet Republic]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1959, p. 197. For a lengthy discussion of communist finances between November, 1918, and February, 1919, see Ferenc Tibor Zsuppán, "The Early Activities of the Hungarian Communist Party, 1918–1919," *The Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 63, no. 101, June, 1965, pp. 318–319.

similarities between the Provisional Government period in Russia and the Károlyi government in Hungary. "The Hungarian *Kerenshchina* will lead to the same end as was the case in Russia. . . . The Hungarian opportunists will have their October soon. . . ."[22] The socialist propensity for absolute belief in the inevitable escalation of revolutionary class struggle lent a great deal of plausibility to his assertions. Kun could also successfully argue that the executive, in a clear breach of its orthodox program, had exceeded its mandate when it joined the bourgeois cabinet, and hence class-conscious socialists owed no further allegiance to their leaders.

Kun spared no time and effort to convert those whom he deemed indispensable to a Bolshevik type of Hungarian party. Groups and individuals whose past and recent conduct automatically excluded them from legitimate participation in socialist politics—the revolutionary socialists, the independent socialists, and a few alienated shop stewards—were not difficult to persuade. Anarchist intellectuals, whose antiauthoritarian beliefs strongly militated against subjection to party discipline, and the engineer socialists, who had long vegetated at the fringes of the antiintellectual Hungarian Social Democratic Party, were at first quite reluctant. József Révai recalled in his memoirs that "Béla Kun and his comrades fought for almost every member [of the group] to win us over to their platform."[23] However, few of Révai's friends and not many engineers could resist promises of a respected place for intellectuals in a future socialist society, unhindered development of productive forces to benefit the entire people, and prospects for a quick victory of socialism. Influential syndicalist shop stewards—formerly staunch antagonists of the socialist leadership—were won over by assurances of central committee memberships and influential positions in the party. Finally, to fill the roster, several corrupt minor trade-union leaders and shop stewards were simply bribed and put on the party payroll. In addition to money, these men were promised high party positions after the defeat of the reformist leadership.[24]

[22] Béla Kun, "Hungarian Kerenskyism," *Pravda,* Oct. 31, Nov. 1, 1918; see also "The Red Specter Begins to Conquer," *Pravda,* Nov. 1, 1918.

[23] József Révai, "Foreword" to Borbála Szerémi (ed.), *Nagy Idők Tanui Emlékeznek* [*Heroic Times Remembered*] Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 10. Owing to a lack of adequate and balanced data on debates preceeding the formation of the Communist Party, it is not possible to fully reconstruct the specific objections and arguments that Kun undoubtedly encountered during these days.

[24] Details of communist bribery are given in Vilmos Böhm, *Két Forradalom Tűzében* [*In the Crossfire of Two Revolutions*], Vienna: Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1923.

To complete the secession from the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and form a Communist Party of Hungary, a conference was convened on November 24, climaxing a week-long session of frantic negotiations.[25] Although Révai claimed that "a positive [pro-Kun] majority had been assured in advance," the available (though admittedly incomplete) evidence does not fully bear out this contention. The meeting was chaired by Károly Vántus and the main speaker was Kun, who pleaded for the immediate formation of the Communist Party of Hungary. Despite the careful selection of participants, evidently there must have been a sharp debate on whether to institutionalize the socialist split and form a party, because at the end no vote was taken on Kun's proposition.[26]

After the main address, the conference proceeded to elect a central committee to coordinate and direct the activities of the newly born communist movement in Hungary. It appears that the entire central committee was not elected on November 24, since with the enlistment of additional opposition factions new members were selected during the next few days. According to Hevesi, he was the first noncharter member coopted into the central committee on December 15.[27] The composition of the central committee—with the exception of the factory stewards—did not fully reflect the actual strength of the various opposition factions of the left.[28] Of the eighteen members, six (Kun, Rabinovits, Seidler, Vántus, Pór, and Nánássy) were former leaders of the Hungarian Bolshevik prisoners

[25] Despite evidence to the contrary, the date of the party-founding conference was fixed as Nov. 20, 1918, by a Central Committee decision of 1948. Possibly this arrangement was for the purpose of qualifying Rákosi, who had attended a preliminary conference on November 20 but was absent on November 24, as one of the party's founders. Since 1957, however, several attempts have been made to "scientifically" establish the exact date of the party's founding. The most recent and most comprehensive study on this "problem" is György Milei, "Mikor Alakult Meg a KMP? [When Was the Communist Party of Hungary Formed?]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 2, 1965, pp. 121–141.

[26] Révai's account of the conference tends to support this conclusion: "The decision to form a communist party was made final, a *fait accompli* so to speak, when *Vörös Ujság*, the party's newspaper, first appeared on December 7 [1918]." Révai, "Foreword" to Szerémi, *Heroic Times . . .*, p. 11. For purposes of this study, however, it will be assumed that the party was founded on Nov. 24, 1918.

[27] Gyula Hevesi, *Egy Mérnök a Forradalomban* [*An Engineer in the Revolution*], Budapest: Europa, 1959, pp. 190ff.

[28] The most notable absentee was Jenő Landler and his "new socialist opposition," which had come into being after the October socialist conference. According to Tibor Szamuely, "Kun's attempts to negotiate with the Landler . . . opposition did not succeed." In Szamuely, *The Communist Party of Hungary . . .*, p. 196n.

of war in Russia and four (Vágó, Szántó, László, and Rudas) were former Hungarian Social Democratic Party officers. The independent socialists, the revolutionary socialists, and the engineer socialists were represented by one man each (Somló, Korvin, and Hevesi). Apparently Kun decided not to risk the success of future operations on intellectuals and shop stewards of unproven reliability and established a permanent majority of experienced and willing activists consisting of the "Bolshevik group" and the four cashiered socialist *apparatchiki.*[29]

The party's first central committee was also notable for the absence of Mosolygó's group of syndicalists and of a representative of formerly unattached leftist intellectuals such as György Lukács. There is some evidence that Mosolygó was offered the vice-chairmanship of the party, which he accepted at first, but later, evidently disagreeing with Kun's haughty manners and methods, resigned and never reappeared in socialist politics. Lukács, then in his period of "Tolstoyan ethical socialism," must have appeared too unpredictable to be entrusted with day-to-day decision making and was denied membership in the central committee at that time.[30] Probably the same was true for members of the radical left *MA* [*Today*] literary group, who were otherwise well suited for the task of "stormy petrel" for the coming revolutions.[31]

[29]Franz Borkenau's statement concerning the qualifications of Kun's group of "Hungarian Bolsheviks" ("none of these men had had any serious revolutionary or even political training before the war; none had held any position of confidence in the labor movement of their home country . . .") must be considered untenable. Károly Vántus, for example, had been a member of the Hungarian socialist party since 1901, at times had served as a member of the national executive, and had held an influential position in the party's propaganda apparat before the war. Except for the young Nánássy, the rest had been full-time socialist organizers in Budapest and the provincial towns before 1914 and had also served as delegates to annual party congresses. Cf. Franz Borkenau, *The Communist International,* London: Faber, Ltd., 1938, p. 114.

[30]For data on Lukács' intellectual posture in the fall of 1918 see Lajos Kassák, *A Károlyi Forradalom* [*The Károlyi Revolution*], vol. 7 of *Egy Ember Élete* [*A Man's Life*] (an autobiography), Budapest: Pantheon, n.d.

[31]József Révai belonged to this group but broke with it after Lajos Kassák, the editor of *MA*, refused to publish one of Révai's nihilistic poems entitled "My Mother, My Father, My First Teacher: You Should Die Like a Dog." For a well-documented study on Révai's road from anarchism to Bolshevism see György Bodnár, "Vázlatok Révai József Pályaképéhez [Sketches on József Révai's Career]," in Miklós Szabolcsi and Lászlo Illés (eds.), *Tanulmányok a Magyar Szocialista Irodalom Történetéből* [*Studies from the History of Hungarian Socialist Literature*], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962, pp. 445–452. On the *MA* group see József Farkas, "A Forradalmi Szocialista Irócsoport Létrejötte [On the Formation of the Revolutionary Socialist Writers' Group]," in *ibid.*, pp. 60–82.

The first accomplishment of Béla Kun and his renegade socialist collaborators was to unite the tottering socialist opposition, which, lacking a cohesive action program, inhibited by traditions of proletarian unity, and without a recognized leader, had proved unable to influence the course of the revolution. The dynamic organizer and persuasive bargainer Kun, in supplying the missing ingredient, the "catalytic agent," had succeeded in establishing a Communist Party on Hungarian soil, thus laying the groundwork for an eventual splitting of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and for a forcible overthrow of the bourgeois-democratic government.

Despite this initial breakthrough, communist chances for success were very uncertain in late November, 1918. Everything depended on the results of the next three or four weeks. If the "Bolshevik hard core" could break down the "myth of socialist unity," infiltrate and win over the trade unions and other revolutionary organizations, enlist the support of the yet uncommitted opposition, establish youth and nationality auxiliaries, and above all, either stun the socialist executive into immobility or antagonize it into reckless actions, then Kun would indeed prove himself as a faithful Bolshevik and good student of the Russian Revolution.

Chapter 5

THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF HUNGARY IN THE BOURGEOIS-DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Shortly after the party's founding meeting on Nov. 24, 1918, Kun and his collaborators—apparently unmindful of the judgment of future historians—set up their first office in a fourth-floor apartment at Number 17, Ügynök Utca [Agent Street], in a middle-class section of Budapest. Paramount in these initial organizing activities was the launching of a communist newspaper, *Vörös Ujság* [Red Gazette]:[1]

> When reading *Népszava,* the Hungarian worker may think that he is holding a bourgeois rag in his hands. . . . He may not even suspect that the hour of decision is near, that socialism is about to be born . . . because, according to *Népszava* and the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, the revolution *has been won. Népszava* has made its peace with the aristocracy, with the bourgeoisie, and with the bankers—and . . . entrusted the National Assembly to legislate socialism. . . .
>
> This is why . . . we communists feel compelled to present ourselves to the Hungarian workers, to prepare them for the *inevitably* forthcoming new proletarian revolution.
>
> We want to maintain the class consciousness of the Hungarian proletariat. We want to detach it from the ignorant, immoral, corrupt ruling classes with whom the proletariat was brought into an unholy alliance; we shall organize the workers for the struggle, arouse in them the purposefully suppressed sentiments of international class solidarity . . . and engage them in the struggle for an international proletarian revolution; ally them with the Russian Soviet Republic, and with any country in which this revolution will break out. We shall pursue this goal through all hell, until the proletarian revolution will have been victorious!

The leading themes of the first editorial—unfinished revolution, recognition of separate working-class interests, awakening of the spirit of internationalism in reference to Soviet Russia—and the companion article, "Why Are We Communists?" by Bukharin, represented the gist of the communist message to the "betrayed proletariat of Hungary."

[1] "For Class Struggle," *Vörös Ujság,* no. 1, Dec. 7, 1918. The socialists' rebuttal appeared four days later in *Népszava.*

This opening statement, however, like the visible part of an iceberg, represented only a fraction of the total communist effort aimed at sinking the fragile vessel of the October revolution. Let us explore some of the crucial properties of the "submerged part" of the communist strategy in the bourgeois-democratic revolution.[2]

On the balance sheet of the opposing political forces, communist strategic superiority is the most impressive aspect of the socialist-communist encounter. Béla Kun and his group possessed the inestimable advantage of having witnessed and personally participated in the Russian revolutions of 1917. For over nine months Kun himself had been engaged in intensive organizational and strategy preparations for a return to Hungary and the engineering of a social revolution there. In addition, he was aided considerably by the "information gap" that prevented his socialist opponents from viewing Hungary's current situation and future prospects from an international perspective. As a former staff member of *Pravda,* and with a constant flow of information from Moscow and abroad through agents of the Russian Red Cross in Vienna and Budapest and confidential government dispatches intercepted for him by Otto Korvin's agents at the wireless office, Kun was probably one of the best-informed men in Hungary at that time.

Past experience and an unusually great access to current information enabled Kun to update and modify some of his earlier concepts (for example, his "four-step" blueprint for a social revolution) in accordance with the political realities of Hungary. It is also likely that his intellectual arsenal included some of the relevant writings of Marx and Engels concerning the correct strategy of the proletariat in the transition period from capitalism to socialism.[3]

From the available literature it is possible to summarize the Communist Party's strategic and tactical goals as two sets of four-point propositions. In terms of overall strategy, the communists were committed to preventing the consolidation of the revolution and promoting political instability in public life; isolating the Hungarian

[2] In the absence of documentary sources and balanced memoir literature a detailed examination of this period would have been impossible before 1959. Partly as an effort to "rehabilitate" some of the "old communists" (most of whom had been purged in the Soviet Union during the 1930s), a volume of communist leaflets and several memoirs pertaining to the period of early December, 1918, to late February, 1919, have been published in Hungary since 1957.

[3] When pressed for ideological justification for some of his antisocialist moves, Kun generally quoted from Engels' "Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League" in Marx-Engels, *Selected Works,* Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955, vol. 1, pp. 106–117.

Social Democratic Party from its bourgeois partners in the coalition government;[4] forcing the socialists either to leave the cabinet to form a purely socialist government, or to remain in power and compromise themselves as willing "allies of the bourgeois capital";[5] and recognizing and exploiting every opportunity inherent in the dynamics of the prevailing dual-power situation, with particular attention to the Budapest Workers' Council and the major trade unions.

A fourfold program for the execution of these objectives was initiated. The communists set out to establish a centralized, flexible, and highly mobile organization of their own to match and surpass the effectiveness of the majority socialist apparatus at every corresponding level. A selective recruiting campaign was initiated to gain converts from the socialist ranks and win new adherents from among soldiers, students, intellectuals, and radical petty bourgeoisie. To these ends, and to clarify the communist position in relation to that of the majority socialists, the communist leadership launched an agitation and propaganda campaign distinguished by its intensity and emotional quality, its selectivity of chosen targets, and the range of subjects covered. Finally, through a special arm of the central committee, they embarked on a program of arms acquisition and mobilization, to legitimize terror and violence in preparing the proletariat for an escalation of general strikes into an armed uprising.[6]

[4] "At the beginning of the movement, of course, the workers cannot yet propose any directly communistic measures. But (1) they can compel the democrats to interfere in as many spheres as possible of the hitherto existing social order, to disturb its regular course, and to compromise themselves as well as to concentrate the utmost productive forces, means of transport, factories, railways, etc., in the hands of the state; (2) they must drive the proposals of the democrats—who in any case will not act in a revolutionary manner—to the extreme and transform them into direct attacks upon private property. . . . If the democrats propose proportional taxes, the workers must demand progressive taxes; if the democrats themselves put forward a moderately progressive tax, the workers must insist on a tax with rates that rise so steeply that big capital will be ruined by it." *Ibid.*, p. 116.

[5] "During the struggle and after the struggle, the workers must, at every opportunity, put forward their own demands alongside the demands of the bourgeois democrats. They must demand guarantees for the workers as soon as the democratic bourgeoisie set about taking over the government. If necessary, they must obtain these guarantees by force, and, in general, they must see to it that the new rulers pledge themselves to all possible concessions and promises—the surest way to compromise them." *Ibid.*, p. 112.

[6] Commenting on the Bolsheviks' strategic advantages over their opponents between the February and the October revolutions of 1917, Adam Ulam observed: "The party built upon the denial of spontaneity and upon the principle of centralization and military discipline was in the best position to use the spontaneous revolutionary impulses of the people without itself being carried by it." Adam Ulam, *The Unfinished Revolution*, New York: Vintage Books, 1964, pp. 190–191.

Establishment of a Party Organization

In his speech of Nov. 4, 1918, Kun proposed the establishment of a "unified, strictly disciplined party," similar to the Russian Communist Party.[7] However, this was more easily proposed than carried out in a country with no tradition of conspiratorial societies. Indeed, until the appearance of the revolutionary socialist cells in early 1918 political secrets simply had not existed in the open society of Hungarian socialism. Therefore the creation within a period of three weeks of a smoothly working central committee and a vast functional apparatus must be considered an impressive feat of organization.[8]

The party's highest organ, the central committee, "had very few formal sessions, with the exception of short meetings twice a week."[9] For security reasons the central committee operated in four groups of four to five men each. Each section enjoyed a great deal of autonomy within its assigned sphere of competence and was responsible for the execution of its own resolutions.[10] Individual members of the central committee were personally responsible for the activities of important subcommittees such as the Communist Party of Hungary faction of the Budapest Workers' Council and the Committee for the Soldiers' Councils and served as liaison men for key trade unions, factories, and city districts. "However, all of us took part in agitprop work—our most important and time-consuming activity."[11]

According to the "Temporary Statutes of the Communist Party of Hungary," only manual laborers and landless peasants were eligible for party membership.[12] Exceptions were made in the case of a non-wage-earner candidate if he was supported by two members at a cell meeting. An elaborate organizational blueprint also provided for two types of party locals—territorial (village, town, city district) and factory (plant, shop)—supplemented by ad hoc committees, con-

[7] For excerpts from the speech, see Appendix D.

[8] To indicate the extent of the proliferation of the party machine, Appendix F shows a reconstruction of the Communist Party's organizational arrangements as of approximately six weeks after the first appearance of *Vörös Ujság*.

[9] Gyula Hevesi, *Egy Mérnök a Forradalomban* [*An Engineer in the Revolution*], Budapest: Europa, 1959, p. 202.

[10] Rezső Szaton, "Emlékeim [Memoirs]," in László Svéd (ed.), *A Vörös Lobogó Alatt* [*Under the Red Banner*], Budapest: Ifjusági Kiadó, 1955, p. 121. Kun's misgivings about coffee houses must have been allayed, because each of the four central committee sections held its meetings in coffee houses in Budapest.

[11] Hevesi, *An Engineer . . .*, p. 203.

[12] Text in *Vörös Ujság*, no. 7, Dec. 28, 1918.

ferences, and executive committees.[13] Probably the most important of the statutes was the stipulation that each party member was to form communist factions in his place of work and unerringly to carry out orders issued by higher party organs. It seems that the benefits of democratic centralism were preserved only for the central committee and the few score of individuals directly associated with it.[14]

Centralized decision making did not thwart local initiative altogether. In fact, the party press invariably supported any leftist action (such as communist-instigated scandals in factory workers' councils and seizures of plants) that in the central committee's judgment tended to accelerate the revolution or sharpen antagonisms between communists and socialists. A system of communication through messengers, separation of local party cells from one another, and the designation of an alternative central committee completed the initial organizational arrangements. The end result was a fast-moving, hard-hitting party apparatus that often outflanked and easily penetrated the socialist machine at its most vulnerable points.

The Communist Recruitment Program

The aspect of communist strategy most puzzling to socialist and bourgeois historians alike was the resounding success of the party's recruiting campaign. Most observers attributed this to lowered public morale, to the current fever to join one or more political or economic association as insurance against the uncertain future, and to the messianic appeal of the communist message:[15]

> The unorganized proletariat of Eastern Europe and its industrially inexperienced leaders, the enormous masses from the villages who had stumbled through war into revolution and whose superstitious and nationalist mentality, intricately entangled in tradition, was only superficially affected by Bolshevist propaganda—this was the environment in which the new religion could flourish. The primeval religious susceptibility of the masses and the patriotism

[13] With the exception of County Zemplén in the mining areas, the party never succeeded in extending its organization beyond Budapest, two other major cities, and the mining districts, and these elaborate organizational schemes were worth no more than the paper on which they were written.

[14] The "Party News" section of *Vörös Ujság* often cited disciplinary action brought against "Comrade X for claiming to have spoken for the Communist Party of Hungary without proper authorization."

[15] Oscar Jászi, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary,* London: King and Son, Ltd., 1924, p. 68.

drilled into them, century after century, suddenly exploded under the pressure of Bolshevism as hatred of capitalism and enthusiasm for communism.

Although there is truth in these explanations, it is more likely that the success of the communist recruiting campaign was due primarily to the party's ability to communicate with carefully selected target groups of the population. The provision that only workers and peasants could join the party automatically excluded the urban and rural intelligentsia, the petty bourgeoisie, and the majority of the peasantry (since most of them owned some land). Strict adherence to such admission policies would have created the nearly impossible task of either having to wrestle thousands of organized workers away from the majority socialists or saturating the countryside with agitators in an effort to seek out the village poor. Very prudently, the party refrained from exploring either of these unpromising alternatives and decided instead upon an approach designed to enlist the potentially amenable segments of the population. On the most general level the party appealed through *Vörös Ujság* to the "still exploited and misled people of Hungary" at large to support the "vanguard of the working class" as participants in demonstrations "for our common cause," or as volunteer workers to read and distribute party literature, or at least to "make an effort to understand the justness of our goals." In addition to constantly reiterated editorial pleas, the party concentrated its membership drive on the trade unions of metal workers, construction workers, and railroad workers, on employees of armament, munitions, and other heavy-industry plants of the Budapest area, on miners and steelworkers of northeastern and western Hungary, on the Budapest Soldiers' Council, former prisoners of war in Russia, and veterans' organizations of noncommissioned officers and disabled soldiers, and on the Association of the Unemployed and the *Lumpenproletariat* of Budapest.[16]

Of these five categories of potential party members, the central committee accorded top priority to the three major trade unions, and in fact assigned five of its members to organize a systematic communist penetration of the Metal Workers' Union. The metal workers had a long history of unsuccessful strikes—most recently in January and June of 1918—which the socialist executive had failed to support, leaving its largest and most radical constituent at the mercy of

[16] Cf. Kun's report on the results of the first weeks of communist organization and recruitment efforts in *Pravda,* Dec. 29, 1918.

inevitable police reprisal and employers' lockouts. The state-employed railroad workers, who, in contrast to the munitions workers, had not received a single raise in wages since 1914, and the seasonally unemployed masons, stonecutters, and roadworkers also nursed similar grudges against the Trade Union Council and majority socialist leadership.[17]

The efforts to recruit workers in munitions factories and the municipal power plant, who were indispensable to plans for arming the proletariat and leading it on to an uprising, were aided by the former independent socialists and by the syndicalist shop stewards, most of whom were won over by late December, 1918.[18]

The traditionally militant miners and steelworkers, who had the longest and bloodiest history of all Hungarian labor unions, were ideally suited to form the first communist beachheads in the hostile countryside. Since the very existence of the cities depended on the uninterrupted supply of coal, it was with good reason that the party dispatched some of its most effective orators—László Rudas, Rezső Szaton, and Mátyás Rákosi—to organize the wholesale defection of miners to the communist fold.[19]

Recapturing the allegiance of recently returned prisoners of war from Russia was one of the main recruiting problems. It was the hour of truth for the "graduates of the Russian Revolution." Were they to renew their Bolshevik affiliation or abandon the communist cause? It appears that many, choosing to ignore Szamuely's farewell message, returned to their families and tried to forget what had happened in Russia. A small percentage decided to aid the communist effort and

[17] Cf. speeches of delegates from these unions at the Extraordinary Congresses of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party of Feb. 10 and Oct. 13, 1918, in Mrs. Sándor Gábor *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 5, Nov. 7, 1917–March 21, 1919, Budapest: Szikra, 1956, pp. 91–95, 249–255. For documentary material on the Metal Workers' Union's defeated strikes in the spring of 1918 and its unanswered pleas to the socialist executive see *ibid.*, pp. 139–147.

[18] It is worth noting that since the militarization of the war industry in the spring of 1915 there had been constant friction between the hamstrung (mainly syndicalist and anarchist) shop stewards in munitions plants and the socialist executive over the refusal of the latter to support antimilitaristic peace propaganda such as that of Mosolygó.

[19] In one of the most dramatic incidents of the period the Salgotarján miners, following Rudas' two-day speaking tour in that area, organized an armed uprising, killed forty people, looted the town, and took over the local administration before the police and the army could restore order.

reported for duty at the party secretariat.[20] Under József Pogány's Machiavellian leadership, the Budapest Soldiers' Council became one of the most destructive forces in the political arena; between November 8 and December 21, it succeeded in forcing the removal of three successive Ministers of National Defense and was instrumental in instituting a system of elected commanders in the Budapest garrison.[21] Among its many possible uses, the Soldiers' Council could be played off against the socialist People's Guard or induced to take over the streets during cabinet crises.[22]

The communists were even more successful in influencing the operations of the 20,000-strong noncommissioned officers' and disabled veterans' associations. In each case, the leadership was made up of bribed demagogues and trusted former prisoner-of-war activists such as Ferenc Münnich, Ferenc Jancsik, and József Rabinovits. Upon discharge members of these groups had received 96 crowns from the government—enough to buy three meals. With no hope of finding employment in civilian life, they justly considered themselves greatly deceived victims of the war and were among the most embittered men in Hungary.[23]

So far as it can be established, the Association of the Unemployed was an original communist contribution to the cluster of newly formed "free association" type of economic interest groups. Although unemployment was a fairly universal phenomenon in that winter, the forcibly uprooted refugees from Transylvania, Ruthenia,

[20] Probably in response to an announcement that appeared daily in the "Party News" column of *Vörös Ujság:* "Communist comrades who have recently returned from Russia—regardless of the Language Group [of the Federation of Foreign Groups, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)] or prisoner-of-war organization or Red Army unit to which you belonged—please report in person at the Secretariat of the Communist Party of Hungary in reference to a matter of great importance." This item first appeared in *Vörös Ujság,* Dec. 21, 1918.

[21] László Lengyel, "A Katonatanácsról [On the Soldiers' Council]," *Társadalmi Szemle,* no. 10, 1958, pp. 103–107; and Tibor Hajdú, *Tanácsok Magyarországon,* 1918–1919-*ben* [*Local Soviets in Hungary*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1958.

[22] Rezső Szántó, "A Kommunisták Munkája a Népőrségben [Communists in the People's Guard]," *Társadalmi Szemle,* no. 11, 1958, pp. 99–108.

[23] Colonel Linder, Károlyi's Minister of Defense, declared in early November: "I do not want to see soldiers any more!" and grandly dismissed the army. After this well-intentioned but ill-timed gesture only the border guards, a few reserve units, a small socialist-controlled People's Guard, and one or two half-demobilized battalions were available to maintain law and order. For Linder's impassioned defense of his famous order of the day see Béla Linder, *Kell-e Katona? A Militarizmus Csődje. Tanulmány a Leszerelésről* [*Do We Need Soldiers? The Bankrupty of Militarism. A Study on Disarmament*], Budapest: 1918.

and Slovakia were the hardest hit.[24] They had nothing to lose but the unheated freight-car compartments that served as temporary shelter in one of the suburban freight yards. Communist recruiters found many eager converts among these unfortunates who were desperate enough to carry out any assignment in return for a bowl of hot soup.

The second level of the selective communist membership drive was directed at a much smaller circle of individuals and groups: middle-echelon socialist organizers, radical students, members of the Budapest middle class, intellectuals, and junior army officers. In this case the vehicles of communication were public lectures and seminars at the University of Budapest, and the journal *Internationale,* which was later to become the party's theoretical monthly.[25] Among the featured speakers at public lectures were Kun, Károly Vántus, and Ernő Pór, who—using Kun's four pamphlets as a syllabus—related the history of the Russian revolutions, explained the nature of political, social and legal innovations of the soviet system, and outlined the steps that would enable the intelligentsia of Hungary to steer the course of the revolution in a similar direction. Kun also gave a widely reported lecture entitled "Wilson and Lenin" in which he attempted to prove the inhuman, insincere, and anti-Hungarian character of Wilson's approach to peace and national self-determination.[26] National self-determination was inconceivable to Kun without the establishment of an international Soviet Republic, which would eliminate all sources of "nationality problems."

Szántó, Rudas, and the former socialist philosopher Sándor

[24] Never before, and certainly not since, have there been so many strange groups and associations in Hungary. These ranged from the Transylvanian Former Landowners' Protective Association to the Ad Hoc Committee of Catholic Priests for the Abolition of Celibacy. In the spring of 1919 another group (very likely formed spontaneously), The Society of Women Persecuted by Fate, completed the roster of these interest-group type of formations.

[25] Gyula Hevesi, "Az *Internationale:* Az Első Magyar Kommunista Folyóirat [*Internationale:* The First Hungarian Communist Journal], *Társadalmi Szemle,* no. 10, 1958, pp. 112–115.

[26] Since Kun's anti-Wilson thesis was, in effect, an ill-concealed nationalist argument against the Entente, his views on foreign policy were enthusiastically seconded by the Budapest middle class. A contemporary observer correctly pointed out: "Wilsonism was never really understood in Hungary. Since people generally like to keep silent about unpleasant truths, many interpreted the right of peoples for self-determination . . . as the right of the Hungarian people to free themselves from the bonds of dualism. However, it was clear . . . [that] Wilsonism in reality meant the unlimited freedom of Hungary's [former] nationalities to realize their aspirations. . . ." Sándor Juhász-Nagy, *A Magyar Októberi Forradalom Története* [*The History of the Hungarian October Revolution*], Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1945, p. 152.

Varjas lectured on the history of the Second International. They stressed its "criminal complicity" in not preventing the war and the necessity for a new Russian orientation of the Hungarian working classes. György Lukács and Béla Fogarasi explored the various moral and ethical aspects of international class struggle and revolution, arguing for the inevitability of a Russian-type proletarian revolution in Hungary. In January, 1919, when Jenő Varga joined the roster of speakers, the lecture topics were extended to problems of workers' management of factories under socialism, the agrarian program, and the economically justifiable extent of nationalization in the transition period.[27]

The journal *Internationale* catered to radical artists, writers, lawyers, and members of the technical intelligentsia. A treatise "Legal and Economic Conditions and the Technical Feasibility of the Immediate Communization of Production" by Gyula Hevesi, the founder of the Interfactory Committee and one of the editors of the journal, dealt with the technological consequences of the war. Following his earlier argument on the special role of engineers and inventors in society—a belief characteristic of an age fascinated by the potentialities of new technology—Hevesi concluded that the current languishing of productive forces would spell the doom of capitalistic society and herald the coming of a new social order. József Révai, Ervin Sinkó, and others issued similar gloomy prophecies concerning literature, art, and the social sciences.[28]

Although these lecture programs and publications did not result in an immediate mass influx of middle-class professionals and intellectuals, several Galileist students, artists, and young engineers, dazed by the newly opened vistas of a communist future, did join the party; through such intellectually respectable channels of communication as the *Internationale*, communism was made acceptable to the radical intelligentsia as a possible alternative to the crisis-ridden transition period; and many socialist middle-echelon cadres began to consider

[27] Summaries of these talks were reported in *Vörös Ujság* and in the radical Budapest press between Dec. 20, 1918, and Feb. 20, 1919. Some of the more notable lectures were Kun, "The Bourgeois and the Proletarian State"; Rudas, "The Petty Bourgeoisie and the Revolution"; Szamuely, "Life in Soviet Russia"; and Lukács, "Terror as a Source of Law." See also "Program of Lectures of the Communist Party of Hungary," second, third, and fourth series, in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, pp. 431, 469, 481.

[28] Some of the more pertinent passages from these studies are reproduced in Hevesi, *An Engineer . . .*, pp. 189–190.

the Kun leadership as a likely replacement for the apparently undecided socialist executive.[29]

In the absence of any published evidence, it is nearly impossible to follow the intricacies of communist personnel recruitment at the highest level. Men of the background and stature in the movement of Gyula Alpári, József Pogány, Jenő Landler, and Jenő Varga could not have been easily persuaded to give up their independence or their high party and trade-union posts to join a party led by a relative newcomer. They were concerned with the long-range prospects of the workers' movement rather than the dismal present, and hence were not unduly impressed with *Vörös Ujság* editorials and the laborious treatises of the *Internationale*. None of these men came close to Ervin Szabó's ideal of a socialist of integrity. However, as politicians they had become increasingly dissatisfied as events progressed with the socialists' ambivalent position in Hungarian politics. In this respect the Communist Party appeared to be everything that the Hungarian Social Democratic Party was *not*—hard hitting, mobile, resolute, and able to furnish ready answers to baffling problems.

Whether it was the persuasive Kun, the logic of developments, or possibly a combination of the two may never be known, but the fact remains that by early February, 1919, Alpári and Varga openly joined the Communist Party and began to take part in its work.[30]

[29] Estimates of results of the three-month-long communist recruiting campaign ranged from a low of 4,000–5,000 (by the socialist commissioner of the Budapest police in his memoirs) to a high of 70,000–75,000 (by Mátyás Rákosi in his speech during his second trial in Budapest in 1935). Károly Dietz, *Októbertől-Augusztusig Emlékirataim* [*From October to August*], Budapest: 1920; and Institute for the History of the Hungarian Working Class Movement, *The Imprisonment and Trial of Mátyás Rákosi*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1954. Jenő Varga, in his study on the Hungarian Soviet Republic written in 1928, said that in January and February the party had "very few members." Jenő Varga, "Vengriia [Hungary]," in *Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia* [*Great Soviet Encyclopedia*], vol. 10, Moscow: Aktsionernoe Obshchestvo Sovetskaia Entsiklopediia, 1928, p. 85. Károlyi was more specific in quoting Vilmos Böhm's estimate of 1,000 (for early February). Michael Károlyi, *Memoirs: Faith without Illusion*, New York: Dutton, 1957, p. 376. In the author's estimation, the total number of party members (organizers, activists, and collaborators) was 4,000–7,000 by the middle of March, 1919.

[30] This was Varga's account of the causes of his change of allegiance: "The chief inducement for the marxistically [*sic*] schooled leaders of the [Hungarian] Social Democratic Party, and in particular for the writer of these lines, to change their political principles lay in their realizing that production could not be built up anew on a capitalistic basis in Hungary nor, for all intents and purposes, in any other [capitalist] countries." Eugene Varga, "Communist Hungary," *The Communist International* (Moscow), vol. 1, no. 1, May, 1919, p. 202.

Pogány, evidently at odds with the moderates of the socialist executive, secretly changed his allegiance in late February. Although the details of Landler's case are the most difficult to document, it is safe to assume that by early March his long-standing disagreements with Garami, Buchinger, and the others drove him to the communist camp.[31]

Indoctrination and Propaganda

The outcome of the communists' organizational and recruiting activities depended to a large extent on the efficacy of the party's agitation and propaganda campaign. Kun and the central committee had to declare their position on every outstanding issue of the day, including the postarmistice period, democratization of public life, land reform, and the place and prospects of the proletariat in the revolution, and to clarify the attitude of the Communist Party toward the majority socialists, the Budapest Workers' Council and the trade unions. Policy statements alone, however, were clearly insufficient to counteract the anti-Bolshevik sentiments formed by the subsidized progovernment press and the trade-union weeklies. In addition to neutralizing such adverse propaganda, the communists were determined to grasp the initiative and maintain it through repetition of the basic message and saturation of the target audience.

The issues of *Vörös Ujság* published between Dec. 7, 1918, and Feb. 20, 1919, contained two types of written propaganda.[32] The first,

[31] There are also indications that near the end of the Károlyi regime Zsigmond Kunfi, Dezső Bokányi, and possibly Vilmos Böhm changed their past attitudes toward the communists from hostility to "watchful neutrality." This seems to be corroborated by the refusal of Hungarian delegates to fully endorse the anti-Bolshevik resolutions of the Bern, Switzerland, socialist conference held in February, 1919. Cf. László Szabó, *A Bolshevizmus Magyarországon: A Proletárdiktatura Okirataiból* [*Bolshevism in Hungary: From the Documents of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*], Budapest: Athenaum, 1919, p. 16. Manó Buchinger, head of the Hungarian socialist delegation to the Bern meeting, seems to support this contention; see Manó Buchinger, *Küzdelem a Szocializmusért: Emlékek és Élmények* [*Struggle for Socialism: Memoirs and Impressions*], Budapest: *Népszava,* 1947, p. 66.

[32] In addition to *Vörös Ujság,* the party launched three weeklies for soldiers, peasants, and young workers. These were *Vörös Katona* [*Red Soldier*], first published on Dec. 26, 1918, *Ifjú Proletár* [*The Young Proletár*], begun on Jan. 5, 1919, and *Szegény Ember* [*Poor Man*], begun on Feb. 13, 1919. On Jan. 1, 1919, the central committee also began a Rumanian-language version of *Vörös Ujság* [*Steagul Rosu*] in 20,000 copies per issue. Cf. Béla Kun, "Letter to Lenin, Jan. 5, 1919," *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaságról* [*On the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1958, pp. 137–138. With the exception of a few issues of *Ifjú Proletár,* these papers were not available to the author.

usually in the form of 500- to 800-word theoretical studies, concentrated on basic long-range issues such as the necessity of an unadulterated dictatorship of the proletariat, the development of communist class consciousness, vigilance in regard to the counterrevolutionary danger, and the desirable scope of socialization. The second dealt with topical matters. In addition to the party paper, a great number of leaflets were directed at selected groups.[33]

As effective as these articles and leaflets undoubtedly were, the party could not have reached the majority of its potential audience without a strenuous campaign of oral agitation and propaganda, and it was the day-to-day, person-to-person technique that carried the main burden of the communist propaganda effort. For every communist, from the central committee members down to the last part-time activist, it was a mandate of party work to spend several hours daily disseminating and explaining party literature to any and all willing listeners.[34]

As on the street corners of Petrograd and Moscow, Béla Kun again proved himself an effective and tireless orator. His colleagues in the central committee—all veteran speakers and organizers—could not keep up with his pace of fifteen to twenty speeches a day. After one such meeting, the socialist writer Kassák wrote in his diary:[35]

> Yesterday I heard Kun speak . . . it was an audacious, hateful, enthusiastic oratory. He is a hard-looking man with a head of a bull, thick hair and

[33] Between early December, 1918, and March 20, 1919, seventy-one topical leaflets were issued by the agitprop apparat. Most of these leaflets were addressed to five major and several smaller trade unions to facilitate the formation of communist factions and to threaten the incumbent leadership with dire consequences should they expel communist organizers from the locals. Twenty-seven items were written for members of the Workers' Council, organizations of the unemployed, and youth groups or contained emergency organizational instructions. *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Röplapjai* [*Leaflets of the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: A Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Kőnyvtár és az Országos Széchényi Kőnyvtár Közös Kiadványa, 1959.

[34] Professional propagandist training was provided by the Central Agitator School (established on or about Dec. 10, 1918) and by the Agitator School of Youth Propagandists (started in late December, 1918). The curriculum of these schools was probably similar to that of the Moscow Agitator School of the Hungarian Group. See also Tibor Szamuely, *A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártjának Megalakulása és Harca a Proletárdiktaturáért* [*The Communist Party of Hungary: Its Formation and Struggle for the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1964, p. 206.

[35] Lajos Kassák, *A Károlyi Forradalom* [*The Károlyi Revolution*], vol. 7 of *Egy Ember Élete* [*A Man's Life*] (an autobiography), Budapest: Pantheon, n.d., p. 190.

mustache, not so much Jewish, but peasant features, would best describe his face. . . . He knows his audience and rules over them. . . . Factory workers long at odds with the Social Democratic Party leaders, young intellectuals, teachers, doctors, lawyers, clerks who came to his room . . . met Kun and Marxism.

However, public speakers of this caliber, who almost singlehandedly could win over socialist locals in a few hours, were limited in number, and other techniques of persuasion had to be devised. Szántó described in his memoirs a particularly successful approach to attract attention and generate controversy.[36]

Another method of agitation was to send two well-instructed comrades to busy streetcorners and have them argue about the internal situation, the Russian Revolution, trickery of the counterrevolution, and any other issues bearing relevance to the dictatorship of the proletariat. One comrade represented the communists, the other, the Social Democratic Party. . . . Soon there was a public meeting . . . and the "communist" debater invariably "won." . . . Sometimes the listeners were close to beating the comrade impersonating the Social Democrat.

The net result of this and similar propaganda techniques was that it became impossible to ignore the communists. As Révai maintained, "There was hardly a worker [in the period of November, 1918, to March, 1919] who was not in some way exposed to communist propaganda at one time or another."[37]

Though deeply embroiled in the never-ending toil of daily grassroots agitation and propaganda, the communist leadership adhered firmly to its list of tactical priorities. High among these was the plan to push the socialist executive into politically untenable positions in order to drive a wedge between it and the organized workers. In this respect the Communist Party had a tremendous tactical advantage in being able to choose the issue on which to attack the socialists with optimum utilization of its limited resources. Kun and Szamuely were well aware from their Russian experiences of the opportunities pre-

[36]Béla Szántó, "Emlékezés a Magyar Tanácsköztársaságra [The Hungarian Soviet Republic]" (excerpts from unpublished memoirs), *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 1, 1959, p. 122.

[37]József Révai, "Foreword" to Borbála Szerémi (ed.), *Nagy Idők Tanui Emlékeznek* [*Heroic Times Remembered*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 13.

sented by an institutionally polarized political environment,[38] and particularly of the vulnerability of the "second leg" of the "dual power," represented in Hungary's case by the Budapest Workers' Council. Unlike the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies in Russia, which was comprised of a conglomeration of leftist parties, the Workers' Council—with 239 trade-union delegates out of a total of 365—was essentially an adjunct of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. In fact, the socialist executive, having refused to permit the election of a presidium in the Workers' Council, was its highest decision-making body.[39]

On Dec. 13, 1918, when the ten-man communist faction first appeared in the Workers' Council, Béla Vágó and his comrades found themselves in the agreeable position of being in the middle of the "enemy camp," but not bound by socialist party discipline in their conduct. In addition to their nuisance value, similar to that of the Bolshevik Duma faction before the war, they also managed to turn the orderly proceedings into debates on the Communist Party's own proposals. When the socialist agrarian program, providing for a limited distribution of the land and a partial indemnification of the former owners, was submitted to the Workers' Council for consideration, the communist draft resolution uncompromisingly declared:[40]

> Any attempted solution intent on preserving private property . . . would prevent the alliance of urban and rural proletariat and would lead to the weakening of the proletarian revolution. It also would endanger the food supplies of the urban proletariat. . . . Harmful as it is, the distribution of land cannot be resisted at this time . . . it must be done without indemnification.
>
> Our program is the following: (1) Organization of councils of the rural poor, their separation from the propertied peasantry, and the sharpening of class antagonisms between them. (2) All large and middle-sized properties and

[38] While in Moscow Tibor Szamuely translated and annotated Bukharin's essay "Class Struggle and Revolution in Russia." This work, which had been written "during the July days of 1917," was especially concerned with the dynamics of Bolshevik strategy in the first stage (March–July, 1917) of the dual-power period. In his preface to the Hungarian edition, Bukharin wrote: "If this pamphlet can shed light on the inner laws of revolution for the Hungarian comrades, then it has already accomplished its task." Nikoláj Buharin, *Osztályharc és Forradalom Oroszországban* [*Class Struggle and Revolution in Russia*], 2nd Hungarian ed., Budapest: A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, 1919, p. 7.

[39] Tibor Hajdú, *Tanácsok Magyarországon,* 1918–1919-*ben* [*Local Soviets in Hungary*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 48.

[40] *Vörös Ujság,* no. 4, Dec. 18, 1918.

inventories . . . must be seized by the councils of the rural poor and transferred to the ownership of the entire people. (3) The rural poor must make a choice between large-scale production on the basis of collective work or small-scale production based on family farms. In no case may hired labor be used in the latter form of production. (4) State-owned farms cannot be expropriated for individual use. (5) The use of land is free for the farming family, but the community of workers is entitled to a share of the proceeds. (6) A national congress of rural poor must be convened without delay.

Before this proposal was submitted no socialist would have conceived of his party as the "guardian of private property" in the countryside, as the communists had alleged, but now doubts began to form in the minds of many delegates. Why were the socialist spokesmen opposed to the councils of the village poor when the rural soviets had proved useful allies of the proletariat in Russia? In view of the executive's concession to Károlyi in permitting certain estate owners to retain up to 150 yokes of land exempt from expropriation, were not the communists the more consistent Marxists in demanding common ownership and cultivation of land?

Next, the communists addressed themselves to the matter of "internal democracy in factory workers' councils." Hevesi argued that "new elements who were brought to the fore by the revolutionary workers' movement" were not only handicapped by the "slowly evolving system [of promotions and individual advancement] in the trade unions," but were also deprived of equitable representation in the socialist-dominated factory councils.[41] This, *Vörös Ujság* maintained, unnecessarily hindered the course of the revolution, since "only through well-organized workers' councils and harmonious preparation for the coming struggle can the proletariat achieve its aims with little bloodshed. . . . Should there be blood spilled in the revolution, let it be bourgeois blood, which thus far has been spared."[42] At a time when many meetings of trade-union locals were ending with brawls between the moderates and the militants, such open threats of a fratricidal struggle over the control of the workers' councils were potent arguments for working-class unity. Thus again, the onus of the "party dictatorship instead of the dictatorship of the entire proletariat" fell on the socialist executive.

Communist proposals concerning taxation, pensions, unem-

[41] *A Szakszervezetek Egységéért* [*For Trade Union Unity*], Budapest: A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, 1918, p. 8.

[42] *Vörös Ujság*, no. 5, Dec. 21, 1918.

ployment compensation, minimum wages, and maximum prices had a similar effect on the now inflation-conscious socialist party. These issues were ideally suited to sabotage the government's program and to enhance the party's popularity as the staunchest foe of the still unexpropriated bourgeoisie and the champion of a starving proletariat still deprived of the just fruits of its labor.

Although all of these communist propaganda overtures were invariably voted down by the bloc of trade-union delegates, the number of procommunist votes gradually increased. This gradual weakening of the executive's hold on the Workers' Council eventuated in a major crisis within the socialist camp in the first week of January. Communist pressures and the deterioration of the internal political and economic situation forced the socialists to reexamine their position and the progress they had made since early November. As a solution to the fermenting crisis, two courses of action were advanced at the enlarged conference of the socialist executive on Jan. 7, 1919. The first, advocated by Sándor Garbai, called for the formation of a purely socialist government. Garami argued for leaving the Károlyi cabinet and remaining in opposition until the elections for the National Assembly were held. Although Garbai's proposal won by a vote of twenty-two to nineteen, in the absence of a clear consensus, the issue was referred to a plenary session of the Workers' Council.[43] The next day Garbai opened the debate with a plea for the formation of a purely socialist government:[44]

> On the one hand, we are part of a coalition government which is still compelled to follow bourgeois policies. On the other, we are faced with the eastern wind which brings the dictatorship of the proletariat to us. (Cheers and applause.) We are also threatened by the counterrevolution and by the jealousies of the dispossessed bourgeoisie. Thus, between these millstones, the party will be destroyed and our best efforts will be in vain. . . .
>
> Therefore, we must consider the possibility of a new revolution. . . . If the Social Democratic Party does not change its course and chooses to continue its former policies, then it will find itself in opposition to the new course of the world that is expressed now in the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . . If we do not move, it may happen that the communist agitation . . . and a desperate bourgeois attack . . . will join forces to weaken and disintegrate the Social Democratic Party.

43 "Minutes of the Enlarged Conference of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party Executive of Jan. 7, 1919," in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, p. 453.

44 "Minutes of the Plenary Session of the Budapest Workers' Council of Jan. 8, 1919," in *ibid.*, p. 454.

Garami asserted in his reply the "Marxist impossibility" of remaining in the government of a country which was "yet unripe to enter socialism" and urged the delegates to abandon the cabinet, go out into the streets and launch a major propaganda campaign to recapture the masses whose allegiance had been lost to the communists. He reminded the meeting that the party's formal alliance with the bourgeoisie was an "abandonment of our traditional socialist strategy and the acceptance of Russian Bolshevik and Hungarian communist methods" that would amount to "Bolshevism in social democratic disguise" and "a concealed delivery of socialist masses" to the Bolshevik fold.

Kunfi, the surprise participant in the debate, then offered a compromise solution to these opposing plans whereby the socialists would remain in the government but double the number of their cabinet posts. The first round of votes was 169 to 101 in favor of the Garbai proposal, but after Kunfi's strong warnings against forming a "pseudo-Bolshevik" regime, his compromise plan was adopted by a vote of 147 to 82, with 40 abstentions.

The uncertain outcome of these debates was most gratifying to the communist leadership. For the first time in the history of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party the executive was sorely divided on a major strategy decision and unable to present a united front to the membership. The members themselves, apparently strongly influenced by communist demands for a speedy introduction of the dictatorship of the proletariat, found little consolation in a continued partnership with the bourgeoisie which solved none of their problems and was bound to prolong the present difficulties. The surprisingly low margin of the final vote and the unprecedented initiative of the delegates in submitting to the executive a petition, signed by seventy trade unionists, suggesting the formation of a mixed commission (three communists and three socialists) to iron out the differences between the two parties were symptomatic of the restlessness and dissatisfaction of the rank and file with its deeply perplexed leaders.[45]

The Communist Party moved quickly to exploit the schism in the hitherto monolithic socialist camp. With typical ruthlessness and directness, *Vörös Ujság,* in an editorial entitled "Let Us Choose," offered its own solution to the socialist palace revolution:[46]

[45] Though the petition was vetoed by the leadership, it still received fifty votes, another "first" in Hungarian socialist history.

[46] *Vörös Ujság,* no. 10, Jan. 7, 1919.

> A party split is becoming inevitable. The two prevailing tendencies . . . (the reformist and the revolutionary) . . . cannot be accommodated within the same organizational framework. It is not only a difference in principles but one of methods. . . . A majority for the revolutionary wing may be achieved in the Social Democratic Party perhaps in several years . . . but there is no time for waiting. We do not intend to push the Social Democratic Party toward the left . . . but rather to help the revolutionary elements break away, so that the reformists and the believers in legal methods would be isolated. We must push the reformists to the right, by splitting off the revolutionaries and uniting them in the [Communist] Party. This is the only way to enable the Hungarian proletariat to take advantage of the revolutionary situation and participate in the international proletarian revolution. Then the majority of the Social Democratic Party . . . will have to face all the consequences of legal methods, including the armed suppression of the revolutionary workers' movement. This will be fratricidal. . . . The only way to avoid this is to separate reformists from the followers of the revolution. . . . Let us choose!

This public call for an open rebellion among the socialists by the Communist Party, now 2,000 to 4,000 strong, was more than the socialist executive could tolerate without instituting equally strong countermeasures. After two weeks of quiet canvassing for votes, it succeeded in obtaining the nearly unanimous consent of the Workers' Council delegates to remove the communists from their midst. On January 28 the Workers' Council resolved to expel the communist faction, and Vágó, Hevesi, and eleven others were bodily ejected from the council's chambers. With this step the government socialists committed themselves irrevocably to a nonrevolutionary course and left the politically and economically unredeemed masses vulnerable to overtures by the communist propaganda apparatus. Unless Bukharin's "inner laws of revolution" were to fail, it was a foregone conclusion that the communists would try to exploit the sharpening of class struggle and the socialists would again retaliate. The escalated conflict should then break out in an armed uprising and eventually lead to a proletarian revolution.

Mobilization of the Masses

Mobilization of the recruited, organized, and indoctrinated masses was the fourth major aspect of communist strategy in the bourgeois-democratic revolution. The central committee's mobilization program was based on the assumption that groups with an identifiable and commonly endorsed set of interests would tend to react favorably when approached by the fast-moving agents of the com-

munist agitprop apparatus. In the broadest sense, such popularly endorsed demands were those for peace, economic betterment, and the democratization of public life. The party's task, therefore, was to furnish the means and motivation for closing the gap between the recognition and the realization of these interests.

During the first two months of 1919 hardly a day passed without one or more public demonstrations on the streets of Budapest. The unemployed, refugees, disabled soldiers, apprentice workers, and university students were inveterate marchers. When the revolution began each of these groups had submitted its demands to the appropriate ministry or revolutionary council. Mass petitions of this type invariably pleaded for regular unemployment compensation, better housing, substantial severance pay, shorter working hours, and the abolition of compulsory fees at the university. However, because of inflation and economic chaos, the government could offer little more than promises or token expressions of sympathy, and communist agitators had little difficulty in convincing these groups (already conditioned to suspect government and authority of any kind) that the government had acted in bad faith. Since the members of the old state bureaucracy still in office effectively prevented the development of other legitimate channels of communication between the government and the people, mass petitions and street demonstrations appeared to be the only means of reaching the new leaders of Hungary.

Public demonstrations, except those called by the socialist executive (which happened only twice during the four and one-half months of the Károlyi government), generally followed a similar pattern. An announcement of a forthcoming public meeting would appear in *Vörös Ujság* and on billboards, then, at the beginning of these usually well-attended affairs, a planted communist propagandist would present the meeting with a draft resolution containing a generously inflated list of the group's grievances. After members of the audience, several of whom had been delegated by communist factions of factories or party district organization, had endorsed the resolution, the meeting would take to the streets. The demonstrators, after presenting the appropriate minister or state secretary with the petition, would march on the city's main thoroughfares to the editorial offices of *Vörös Ujság,* where Kun, Szamuely, or some other central committee member would greet them, endorse the justness of their cause, and exhort them not to be satisfied with minor concessions but

to carry on the fight to the bitter end. Leaflets and free copies of *Vörös Ujság* would then be distributed to the dispersing crowd.

Emboldened by their initial success, some of the more militant communist activists decided to retaliate against the bourgeois newspapers, the most outspoken foes of communism. It is not known whether Kun himself endorsed terrorism as a weapon of class struggle, but Marx and Engels' instructions were quite explicit in this respect: "Far from opposing so-called excesses, instances of popular revenge against hated individuals or public buildings that are associated with hateful recollections . . . must not only be tolerated, but the leadership of them taken into hand."[47] The most notorious example of such terrorism was the temporary seizure and destruction of the printing presses of two bourgeois newspapers in the middle of January, 1919.[48] Although *Vörös Ujság* officially disclaimed any responsibility for the action committed by sailors and thugs wearing red armbands, other articles in the same issue extolled the virtues of individual bravery during revolutionary struggles.[49]

Encouragement and exploitation of nationwide revolutionary tendencies represented the third aspect of the communist mobilization effort. Although the Communist Party was opposed to the principle of individual ownership of land, for tactical purposes it supported and led, through former prisoner-of-war activists dispatched to their native villages, the movement of spontaneous land seizures in the countryside. The communists were particularly encouraged by the fact that estate servants in some Transdanubian counties, instead of distributing the vast holdings, formed voluntary production and marketing cooperatives.[50]

[47] Marx-Engels, "Address . . . ," p. 111.

[48] Communist historians suggest that these raids were to retaliate for the seizure and ransacking of the editorial offices of *Vörös Ujság* on Dec. 23, 1918, by an armed band, presumably tipped off by the communist paper's bourgeois competitors. See Szamuely, *The Communist Party of Hungary,* p. 209.

[49] *Vörös Ujság,* no. 16, Jan. 25, 1919.

[50] This isolated phenomenon later led Kun and Varga to believe that the Hungarian peasantry was ready to forego the benefits of private ownership of land. Cf. Akuzius [Ákos] Hevesi, *Vengerskoe Krestianstvo i Ego Bor'ba* [*Hungarian Peasantry and Its Struggle*], Moscow-Leningrad: Gosizdat, 1927, p. 117; Vera Szemere, "A Munkás-paraszt Szövetség Egyes Kérdései 1919-ben [Certain Problems of the Worker-Peasant Alliance in 1919]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 1, 1959, p. 25; and Zsuzsa L. Nagy, "A Tanácsköztársaság Dunántuli Előzményeiről, 1919 Január–Március [On the Transdanubian Background of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, January–March, 1919]," *Történelmi Szemle,* nos. 1–2, 1958, pp. 174–191.

A far more important development was the seizure of several factories by the local workers' councils, a process that had begun in early January. Communist-inspired charges of mismanagement and "counterrevolutionary bourgeois sabotage," coupled with excessive wage demands, forced many factory directors to curtail production or shut down plants. To prevent this, the factory workers' councils expelled the directors, and sometimes the foremen seized the premises and voted for wage raises and larger food packages. The ensuing breakdown in production marked another communist victory against order and stability.

The proposed rent strike was the Communist Party's original contribution to the confusion of the strike-ridden winter of 1918–1919.[51] This is how the confidential report of the Hungarian delegation to the first congress of the Third International described this exploit:[52]

> The party . . . tried to create difficulties for the bourgeois government in coalition with the Social Democrats by forcing the latter to show openly its antiproletarian character. For example, we began to agitate for the nationalization of [apartment] houses and called on the Budapest proletariat to refuse to pay rent. Thus we forced the Social Democrats to utilize the police for evictions, which led to a further alienation of the masses from the Social Democrats. During this action the Social Democratic Party was obliged to side with private property. . . .

Although the rent strike was a dismal failure (even Kun paid rent for the party offices), it did succeed in dramatizing the appalling housing conditions in Budapest.[53]

By early February it was apparent that the Communist Party was still very far from achieving its ultimate objective—storming the fortress of capitalism with hope of success. The communists' impressive performance in building up their organization and infiltrating the trade unions had made scarcely a dent in the socialist apparatus. Moreover, the central committee was considerably alarmed by the prospect of a coming election, by the passage of a law regulating the

[51] The campaign was announced in *Vörös Ujság* on January 25 under the slogan "Down with the Rent Sharks!"

[52] László Rudas and Gábor Kohn, "Report of the Communist Party of Hungary to the Executive of the Third International," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 1, 1959, p. 180.

[53] After an across-the-board rent reduction was affected, everyone complied with the law and nobody was evicted. The strike was officially called off on February 6. Cf. "You Cannot Intimidate Us!," *Vörös Ujság,* no. 20, Feb. 6, 1919.

factory workers' councils, and by the revival of irredentist counter-revolutionary organizations. Possibly taking the cue from the Bolshevik strategy of June, 1917, they decided to bring the long-simmering crisis to a head. On February 3, *Vörös Ujság* issued the battle cry: "Proletariat arm yourself! Be armed to the teeth!" After listing a veritable catalogue of real and imaginary grievances sustained by the working class, the inflammatory editorial concluded:

> To hell with bourgeois democracy! To hell with a parliamentary republic which makes it impossible for the masses of the proletariat to act. . . . Long live the republic of the councils of the workers, soldiers, and village poor which will assure the rule of the exploited. . . . To arms, proletariat!

During the next few days the central committee's Agitprop Committee for Greater Budapest organized several mass meetings to discuss the topic of "How to Smash the Counterrevolution." On February 6, *Vörös Ujság* went a step further and directly challenged the government, calling it an accomplice of the counterrevolution:

> Proletarians! There is a new revolution ahead of you! Get arms, wherever and however you can, to disarm the counterrevolution of the bourgeoisie . . . so you may live with the right of revolution, and all enemies of the revolution will be buried or hanged. It is your job to eradicate the counterrevolution, for even the government supports the counterrevolution and refuses to fight it.

At that moment it seemed that the new strategy, though clearly stemming from a position of desperation and weakness, had paid off. Aside from a temporary police seizure and ransacking of the editorial office of *Vörös Ujság,* the government and the police seemed unable to silence these venomous attacks and put an end to the illicit arms traffic between the Soldiers' Council and the communists.[54]

However, in response to the crisis, the socialist executive convened an Extraordinary Party Congress on February 9. The one-day meeting fully approved the executive's report and resolved to purge the party and the trade unions of the "communist splitters" and generally to take measures to ensure party discipline against "non-Socialist intruders."[55] The Communist leadership, sensing that the socialist executive indeed meant to enforce its ultimatum, executed

[54] For government debates on ways of blocking these subversive efforts see Vince Nagy, *Októbertől-Októberig* [*From October to October*], New York: Pro Arte, 1962, chap. 17. Nagy was a Radical Party Minister of Interior in the Berinkey cabinet that was formed during the late January reorganization of the government to serve until elections were held in the spring.

[55] For the proceedings of the Extraordinary Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party of Feb. 9, 1919, see *Népszava,* Feb. 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 1919.

another about face in strategy and issued new instructions to refrain from violence and speeches that might jeopardize the existence of communist cells in the trade unions.[56]

These warnings came too late either to stop the momentum of demonstrations and violence or to prevent socialist countermeasures. On February 20 the Association of the Unemployed marched before the editorial office of *Népszava* to present its demands to the socialist members of the cabinet. Fearing violence, the socialists requested police protection. For reasons still not explained, the demonstrators and the police became embroiled in a fight during which anarchist soldiers shot and killed four city policemen. Unwilling to tolerate organized terror on the streets, the government, with the socialists' consent, decided to retaliate:[57] on the following day the police arrested sixty-eight known communists on charges of conspiring against public order and inciting to riot.[58] Among those arrested were Béla Kun and most of the key personnel of the communist organization. The Communist Party's central offices and printing facilities were seized by the police, and the coming issue of *Vörös Ujság*, propaganda leaflets, and party membership cards found on the premises were confiscated by the procuracy as material evidence. With the imprisonment of the leading communist personnel, the government and the socialists considered the matter closed and the chief source of subversion eliminated from the political scene. Thus the first stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution came to an end.

56 "Confidential Circular concerning the Party's Strategy after the Socialist Congress," in Gábor, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, pp. 547–548.

57 Tibor Hajdú, "A KMP Vezetőinek 1919 Február 21-i Letartóztatása a Minisztertanács Elött [The Case of the Communist Leaders' Arrest of Feb. 21, 1919, on the Agenda of the Council of Ministers]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 2, 1965, pp. 169–173.

58 "Indictment of the Hungarian State Procuracy, Budapest Judicial District concerning Béla Kun and Associates, March 17, 1919." Partial text in *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1959, pp. 186–201.

Chapter 6

THE RISE OF THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC

On March 21, 1919, exactly one month after the apparently defeated communist conspirators had been taken to jail, they emerged from prison to form a coalition government with the majority socialists and launch the Hungarian Soviet Republic. There have been few exploits in the stormy history of international communism to compare with this stunning victory; within thirty days the enemies of the state had become its rulers and saviors. Communist historians—with generous amounts of hindsight—have found it convenient to use the phrase "July days in February" in explaining these paradoxical changes. In view of the Hungarian communist leadership's deliberate emulation of the Bolshevik tactics of the Provisional Government period, this comparative approach, despite its obvious limitations and only partial relevance, merits further examination.

In the spring of 1917 the Bolsheviks had issued the slogan "All Power to the Soviets." On Lenin's instructions it was withdrawn after the riots of July 16 to 18 in Petrograd. In Hungary, on Feb. 3, 1919, *Vörös Ujság* called for "All Power to the Councils of Workers', Soldiers', and Poor Peasants' Deputies." Ten days later the central committee in its confidential instructions to party activists, in effect, withdrew the slogan. In both cases these slogans for a transfer of power to the soviets were understood by the masses as a call for an armed uprising in the immediate future. Lenin and Kun wrote equally forceful reminders of the danger of an overextended, and hence not fully controllable, party apparatus which might fall prey to counter-revolutionary provocations. Both leaders were emphatic in calling attention to belated responses of agitprop activists to the changing slogans of the central committee. In fact, Kun himself took great pains to assure Lenin on this account: "Please rest assured. . . . I will handle things in a firm Marxist manner; no Putsch of any kind will be possible until we are ready to take power in our own hands. . . ."[1]

In the case of both the July riots in Russia and the February riots

[1] Béla Kun, "Letter to Lenin, Jan. 5, 1919," *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaságról* [*On the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1958, p. 138.

in Hungary the communists were not ready to assume the leadership of the unauthorized spontaneous street riots, but in both instances they were prepared to take responsibility for the defeated actions. Any useful comparison of the two situations ends at this point. In Russia Lenin, the party's leaders, and the majority of the central committee escaped arrest, leaving only the newly converted Trotsky and the veteran Kamenev, Lunacharsky, and a number of lesser functionaries detained for a period of time. Thus, with Lenin at the helm, the continuity of experienced leadership was assured and the Bolsheviks' organizational integrity at the top level was not seriously or permanently disturbed.[2] The Hungarian communists were in a much weaker position than the Bolsheviks had been in August, 1917. Three months of preparatory work by the Hungarian party could not have produced a leadership, underground organization, and propaganda apparatus comparable to that of the Bolsheviks, which they had been building up since 1903. As a result, the Hungarian communists, fully cognizant of their party's intrinsic weaknesses, were forced to resort to an entirely different course of action. The central committee, faced with the consequences of revolutionary actions it had not sanctioned, decided that nothing short of a dramatic step could restore the communists' shattered position in Hungarian politics.

The Bargaining Position from Prison

Béla Szántó recounted that the central committee had had advance knowledge of the government's decision to arrest the communists:[3]

> The situation was such that if we tried to escape arrest, the Social Democratic slanders would fall in fertile soil among the workers, and the mood of the masses—for the time being—would change in favor of the Social Democrats. Therefore, the central committee decided to undergo arrest—and at the same time to assure the continuity of the party's leadership.

Szántó's account of the central committee decision tends to reduce the matter to a brave but desperate attempt to recapture the workers' sympathy. However, this "temporary strategic surrender" could ac-

[2] Recent anti-Stalin literature suggests that at the Sixth Congress (August, 1917) the resourceful Stalin actually urged Lenin to undergo arrest in order to dramatize the Bolsheviks' case.

[3] Béla Szántó, "Emlékezés a Magyar Tanácsköztársaságra [The Hungarian Soviet Republic]" (excerpts from unpublished memoirs), *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1959, p. 124.

tually have been a shrewdly conceived step of provocation designed to exploit a number of political and psychological factors working in the communists' favor. In any event, whether the central committee was conscious of the full implications of its detainment or grasped only its immediate psychological impact on the working class, the results of this calculated risk surpassed Kun's most sanguine expectations.

As the communists' luck would have it, the police made a great mistake in the very first hours after the detainees were herded into their cells. Incensed by the shooting of four of their colleagues, a group of policemen, apparently unaware of the presence of a police reporter from *Az Est* [*Evening*], an afternoon tabloid, entered Kun's cell and clubbed him into a state of unconsciousness. Within six hours the streets were flooded with newspapers carrying a detailed description of the event, including the probable number of broken bones and amount of blood lost by the "captured Bolshevik chief."[4] Lajos Kassák, a reliable chronicler of those months, wrote in his diary:[5]

> If the officials thought that they could suppress the movement by arresting the communist leaders, they were fatally mistaken. The movement was not strong enough to assume power within a short period of time, but the arrest and beating of its leaders was as if fuel were poured on slowly burning embers. After the *Az Est* report on Kun's beating appeared, the sympathy of the greater part of the workers went to the communists. The papers published the transcripts of police examinations. The accused behaved quite bravely. . . .

Kun's reaction to the news report somewhat startled his comrades, who heard him singing the "Internationale" from his sickbed. "I thought he had gone mad," wrote Szántó, who occupied the adjacent cell. The realization of the tremendous publicity value of Kun's martyrdom, however, soon explained his strange behavior.[6]

The astute politicians Garami and Buchinger and the diehard anticommunist majority of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party responded equally fast to the wave of public sympathy for the communists. On February 25 the socialists held a mass rally to eulogize the four policemen who had been slain while defending the party's head-

[4] *Az Est* (Budapest), Feb. 22, 1919. Cf. Vilmos Tarján, *The Terror*, Budapest: 1919.

[5] Lajos Kassák, *A Károlyi Forradalom* [*The Károlyi Revolution*], vol. 7 of *Egy Ember Élete* [*A Man's Life*] (an autobiography), Budapest: Pantheon, n.d., pp. 217–218.

[6] Szánto, "The Hungarian . . . ," p. 125.

quarters, and the presence of 250,000 organized workers at the memorial service made Szántó and many communists wonder whether their sacrifice had not been in vain.[7]

A set of new developments, however, soon overshadowed the impact of this impressive demonstration of socialist strength. On February 26, the "Old Galileists," veterans of wartime pacifist propaganda and traditional critics of the socialist executive, held another rally protesting police brutalities and demanding the release of the arrested communists. At the end the gathering approved a resolution that contained this sharp and rather unfair reminder of the socialists' reformist past:[8]

> We are not surprised to witness the poisonous deeds of those who had turned over their opposition to the police after the January [1918] strikes. With this crime [of arresting and beating the communists] the socialists became worthy of their past. . . . They slandered Liebknecht and Luxemburg before they died and called Ervin Szabó a "crazy bookworm" because he had condemned the social democratic "political morality."
>
> We demand the immediate release of those who obviously had no part in the demonstrations before the *Népszava* [building], and who are kept behind bars solely because of their communist beliefs.

On the following day an "Old Galileist" delegation was received by Károlyi. He promised to speed up the investigation and caused the immediate release of a few university students who had been caught with the communists in the police dragnet. At the same time, Károlyi received a telegram from Lenin advising him of the arrest of the Hungarian Red Cross Mission in Moscow. According to the telegram, the treatment and eventual release of the members of the mission were to be determined by the fate of the communists in Budapest.[9] The government issued a statement granting immunity to communists still at large from persecution on grounds of membership in the Communist Party. The charge of "inciting to murder" was dropped, and

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[8] Márta Tömöri, *Uj Vizeken Járok. A Galilei Kör Története* [*History of the Galileo Circle*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1960, pp. 269–270.

[9] Vilmos Böhm, *Két Forradalom Tüzében* [*In the Crossfire of Two Revolutions*], Vienna: Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1923, p. 183. The Soviet government also detained several prisoner-of-war staff officers and aristocrats as additional "insurance" against possible mistreatment of the Hungarian communists. Sándor Juhász-Nagy, *A Magyar Októberi Forradalom Története* [*The History of the Hungarian October Revolution*], Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1945.

Kun and his comrades in prison were treated with the traditional deference due political prisoners.[10]

While the radical intellectuals were lobbying for the communists with their influential friends, profound changes were taking place in the socialist hierarchy. According to the Hungarian delegation's confidential report to the first Comintern congress, the defeated rent strike of early February had "led to a secret split within the Social Democratic Party. An openly conservative . . . right wing came about which became alienated from the center and the left wing. Later events justified the correctness of our tactics, because the center and the left wing broke away from the right. . . ."[11] Jenő Varga and József Pogány, the first defectors, were joined by others after February 21. Following the arrests, Kunfi, appalled by the police atrocities, submitted a resolution at the next cabinet session requiring the government to "take a stand of equal severity toward the right counterrevolution."[12] Károlyi, whose brother had been implicated in an amateurish plot of the landed aristocrats to overthrow the government, was compelled to act. As a result, about 100 retired generals and magnates and a Catholic bishop were placed under house arrest.

Kunfi and the leaders of the Metal Workers' Union were not satisfied with locking up a few known archconservatives in their hotel suites, castles, and pastoral palaces, but began to explore ways to effect a reconciliation between the socialists and their stray comrades languishing in prison. Kunfi and the socialist left realized that arresting the opposition or holding mass meetings would not solve any of the country's urgent problems, and that only the counterrevolution and the Entente would profit from the disunity ensuing from the battle of slogans between the socialists and the communists. Therefore, on February 25, while the policemen's funeral procession was in prog-

[10] Tömöri, *A History . . .*, p. 162. Thanks to Károlyi and Kunfi's personal intercession, the captive communists enjoyed unusually extensive privileges in prison after the first week of March. Open cells, an unlimited number of visitors (the number averaged 400 per day), the use of office equipment, a private conference room, and specially catered food were provided for these enemies of the republic. "These concessions clearly proved the government's weakness . . . and we fully exploited the situation." Szántó, "The Hungarian . . . ," p. 128.

[11] László Rudas and Gábor Kohn, "Report of the Communist Party of Hungary to the Executive Committee of the Communist International," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1959, p. 181.

[12] László Szabó, *A Bolsevizmus Magyarországon. A Proletárdiktatúra Okirataiból* [*Bolshevism in Hungary: From the Documents of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*], Budapest: Athenaum, 1919, p. 19.

ress, some members of the socialist executive took the first steps for secret negotiations with the imprisoned communists.

At the same time the socialists were making overtures to heal the rift in the workers' movement. Béla Kun's "secret weapon," the party's second central committee, began its work.[13] The alternate central committee held its first full meeting on Feb. 24, 1919, and resolved to conscientiously execute the main political line of the detained "first" central committee, resume publication of *Vörös Ujság* in the immediate future, reestablish the central party office, continue its agitprop work in the Soldiers' Council and in veterans' organizations, organize the party's own army of workers and create factory units of armed workers, work to strengthen communist cells in factories and trade unions, and observe "revolutionary vigilance" in repelling counterrevolutionary provocations.[14] According to the prearranged division of labor among members of the second central committee under Szamuely's overall supervision, Hevesi was in charge of party groups in factories, Ferenc Rákos and Ernő Bettelheim were to edit the resuscitated *Vörös Ujság,* Hevesi and others were to supervise the communist cells in Budapest, and "other comrades were entrusted with assignments of military character."[15]

On the same day printed leaflets entitled "In Spite of Socialist Police Terror We Are Still Here" were distributed at factory gates. Two days later a provincial edition of *Vörös Ujság* appeared in Budapest. On March 1 the Communist Party's central office resumed its round-the-clock operations. Kassák, who lived in an apartment next to the party office, wryly remarked, "It was business as usual with the communists: Lukács and some others wrote *Vörös Ujság,* pamphlets came out every day, and the agitators kept agitating."[16]

The communists' remarkably fast recovery and ability to turn Kun's physical deprivations into an immediate psychological handicap for the socialist executive attested to the superiority of Kun's

[13] According to Ernő Bettelheim, as related to Hevesi, members of the second central committee had been appointed by Kun in December, 1918. Rákosi, during his trial of 1935, also intimated the existence of a third central committee. Cf. Gyula Hevesi, *Egy Mérnök a Forradalomban* [*An Engineer in the Revolution*], Budapest: Europa, 1959, p. 211.

[14] For the full text of the resolution see *ibid.,* p. 214. See also Ferenc Rákos, "A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja Második (Illegális) Központi Bizottságának Munkájáról [On the Work of the Second (Illegal) Central Committee of the Communist Party of Hungary]," *Társadalmi Szemle,* no. 2, 1959, pp. 94–99.

[15] Hevesi, *An Engineer . . .*, p. 215.

[16] Kassák, *The Károlyi Revolution . . .*, p. 220.

Bolshevik political techniques over the sluggishness of the socialists' anticommunist tactics. This, however, still did not add up to more than a draw. Kun and sixty-odd communists were still in prison, and the socialists still dominated the coalition government. An additional thrust was needed to tip the scale and resolve the crisis.

As the days of March wore on it became increasingly evident that the "objective" revolutionary conditions were working in favor of the communists. Social and political forces unleashed by the October revolution, which had been recognized, organized, and encouraged by skillful communist agitation and propaganda, suddenly acquired self-generating properties of their own, threatening the very existence of the democratic government of Hungary. More and more factories were taken over by the workers; hungry peasants seized several estates and looted the granaries; officials of major cities were forced to resign at gunpoint and turn over the administration to the workers' councils; detachments of drunken sailors roamed the streets of Budapest; the army and the police could not be trusted to maintain law and order; it seemed as if democratic Hungary's "death wish" had come true.[17]

The socialists were sorely divided on possible ways to stem the tide of chaos. The majority pressed for the dissolution of armed detachments not in uniform, for further arrests among the communists, and for the holding of elections to enable the party to form a purely socialist government. The leftists argued for the reunification of the working class through readmission of the expelled rank-and-file communists to the party, for immediate reexamination of the socialists' position in the coalition government, and for the initiation of an aggressive propaganda campaign to counter communist agitation.[18] In view of their evident inability to agree on or to implement either course of action, the appearance of a socialist negotiating team in the communists' prison cell could not have come as a surprise to Béla Kun.

The Communist-Socialist Alliance

The first group of negotiators, headed by Ignác Bogár (an old syndicalist worker), had been dispatched by the Metal Workers'

[17] For a day-by-day account of incidents of lawlessness and confusion see Böhm, *In the Crossfire . . .*, pp. 234–237.

[18] For detailed reports on the proceedings of the Budapest Workers' Council and its debates on the new social democratic strategy see *Népszava,* Feb. 25, March 4, 8, 1919.

Union. In the course of several conversations Kun and Bogár covered the full range of problems, particularly those which had contributed to working-class disunity.[19] Since these talks did not bring any tangible results, at Bogár's request Kun drafted a memorandum giving a detailed exposition of the Communist Party's stand on the Hungarian political crisis.[20] In an effort to prove the "historic necessity of the separation of the revolutionary socialists from the opportunist elements of the movement," Kun began his letter by citing the example of Lenin, Luxemburg, Mehring, and the German Independent Socialists, without whose defection from the majority there would not be an impending world revolution. In the same vein, he argued that "before the Hungarian workers' movement can unite, it must separate." Maintaining that the unification of the workers' movement was a "dialectic inevitability," Kun added, "Though I do not feel more akin to the Hungarian proletariat than, let us say, to the American, Czech, or Russian . . . subjectively I should be happier to see that not a divided but a unified Hungarian working class would witness the victory of the proletarian revolution in this country." The letter then proceeded to elaborate on the particulars of the communist platform:

> 1. No support of the so-called People's Government . . . cessation of all class cooperation. Transformation of the working-class organizations into Councils of Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants.
>
> 2. Abandonment of the policy of so-called territorial . . . integrity. . . . A proletarian party can consent to a revolutionary war only if all power is definitely passed to the industrial and agricultural proletariat . . . [and] full guarantee is offered that the war will not create new national oppression.
>
> 3. The revolution in Hungary is now in a transitory stage from its . . . national phase to an epoch of purely proletarian [or] social revolution . . . hence the activity of the Hungarian proletariat must develop on these lines: No parliamentary republic but—as a transitory stage—a centralized republic of Councils of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies. Abolition of the standing army . . . and police . . . and their replacement by the class army of the proletariat. . . . Complete abolition of bureaucracy. The councils should be not only legislative but executive and judicial organs as well. All offices are to be elective. . . . The remuneration of the officials should not exceed that of the skilled

[19] Ignác Bogár, "A Magyarországi Proletárpártok Egyesülése [The Unification of the Hungarian Proletarian Parties]," in Jakab Weltner (ed.), *Az Egység Okmányai* [*The Documents of Unity*], Budapest: Közoktatási Népbiztosság Kiadása, 1919, p. 6.

[20] Béla Kun, "Letter to Ignác Bogár," *On the Hungarian . . .*, pp. 139–148. The Soviet leadership was very much impressed with this letter and subsequently reproduced it as a shining example of correct tactics, to be emulated under similar circumstances. *The Communist International,* vol. 1, no. 2, June, 1919, pp. 225–230.

workers. Higher pay—as Russian experience teaches—can be granted only to specialists. . . .

The following steps are deemed important to facilitate transition to socialism:

5. The expropriation of all estates for the proletarian state. . . . All lands not cultivated by the owner and his family . . . must be declared the property of the state. . . . Resolute struggle must be waged against the distribution of land. In this respect the formation of agricultural cooperatives is considered as a short-term temporary phenomenon.

6. The nationalization of banks and the seizure of all deposits. . . .

7. The socialization of industry and transportation. . . .

8. State monopoly of foreign trade and wholesale commerce. . . .

9. A full and immediate realization of labor and welfare demands contained in the so-called transitional program of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. . . .

10. State propaganda of socialism . . . [and] separation of church and state; the schools must be entirely in the service of education for Socialism.

In conclusion, Kun called for a "joint conference of revolutionary elements" to discuss the communist platform. His conditions for the proposed meeting provided for rewriting the socialist program to include a "new evaluation of imperialism as a distinct stage of capitalism," a statement establishing the bankruptcy of capitalism, a stand against state socialism and state capitalism, and the endorsement of a Soviet Republic as the new form of state. In addition, Kun demanded the party's immediate adherence to the Communist International. The letter ended with this ominous warning: "There shall be a final battle which will unite the proletariat. . . . This is what happened in Russia . . . where it was *not* the Bolsheviks who embraced the Menshevik platform."[21]

If this bluntly worded ultimatum had been presented in December or February, it would have been rejected indignantly by the socialist leadership, but this was no longer possible in March. Even though Kun asked for no less than an explicit repudiation of the socialist record of the past four months, Kunfi, Garbai, Böhm, and Weltner found the communist proposals acceptable for purposes of negotiation. This turnabout from stern opposition to compromise and

[21] Perhaps to add insult to injury, Kun found it necessary to make this boastful admission: "I am not ashamed, on the contrary, I am proud of the fact that Lenin—and now I am at liberty to tell you—and even the German Spartacists have been supporting our struggle [for the dictatorship of the proletariat in Hungary]. Nor am I ashamed of this support that has been expressed in terms of rubles: on the contrary, I am proud that Radek and I have been most worthy of this confidence."

possible surrender was prompted by a variety of recent developments. On March 15 the Radical Party announced that it would not participate in the election campaign lest "socialist tyranny" prevail after its electoral victory.[22] Reports from rural regions indicated widespread sabotage of the socialist-endorsed grain-delivery scheme, which the communists had called "ineffectual and a sellout to the village bourgeoisie." On March 18 a mass meeting of several thousand steelworkers resolved to fight for the release of the imprisoned communists, with arms if necessary. On March 19 the Printers' and Typesetters' Union announced that it would go on a two-day strike, the first organized work stoppage directed against not the employers or the state but against the socialist party. On the same day Károlyi informed the cabinet that in the judgment of the government's military experts it would be only a matter of weeks before the Russian Red Army would break through the Rumanian lines and reach the eastern boundaries of Hungary.[23] This also coincided with reports of unusually intensive Entente troop movements in the east and north.[24]

Pressed by these circumstances, the socialist executive—with the exception of Garami and four of his colleagues, who disassociated themselves from the plan—dispatched a committee to begin serious negotiations with the imprisoned communists.[25] On March

22 "At the beginning of March . . . preparations for the elections for the National Assembly were made. The experience of Germany and German Austria left no doubt that a social democratic majority would not be formed. At the same time, the workmen were not inclined to give way to the bourgeois majority. The social democratic party openly declared that they would recognize the result of the elections only in case of an issue favorable to them. They threatened to dissolve the assembly by armed force. This was openly taking the field against bourgeois democracy. . . ." Julius Alpáry, "The Course of Revolution in Hungary," *The Communist International*, vol. 1, no. 2, June, 1919, p. 202. Whether Alpári's story truly reflected the mood of the working class in early March, the fact remained that the socialist executive had to either take a stand on this issue within a few weeks or see its masses march over to the communist camp.

23 The military experts, Aurél Stromfeld and Jenő Tombor (both former strategists of the Austro-Hungarian army's general staff), also predicted the Russian Red Army's "inevitable victory" and urged Károlyi to join forces with it to save Hungary from an Entente invasion. Szabó, *Bolshevism in Hungary . . .*, pp. 26–27.

24 At that time the Hungarian army consisted of two undermanned divisions and a token force of frontier guards. They faced a Rumanian, Serbian, French, and Czech force at least eight times stronger, which surrounded Hungary. László Szabó, *A Bolsevizmus Magyarországon* [*Bolshevism in Hungary*], Budapest: Athenaum, 1919, pp. 26–27. See also József Breit, *A Magyarországi* 1918–1919 *évi Forradalmi Mozgalmak és a Vörös Háború Története* [*A History of the Revolutionary Movements in* 1918–1919 *in Hungary and the "Red War"*], vol. 1, Budapest: A Hadtörténelmi Levéltár Kiadása, 1925.

25 *Budapesti Közlöny*, Aug. 15, 1919.

19, while the first bargaining session was in progress, Colonel Vyx, the French chairman of the Entente mission in Budapest, visited Károlyi and handed to him a memorandum ordering the Hungarian government to create a neutralized zone on the eastern boundaries and to evacuate all Hungarian units behind the newly formed lines of demarcation. It was widely believed that the ultimatum, if complied with, would have placed the entire country, except for a twenty-mile radius around Budapest, under Entente occupation.[26]

An emergency cabinet meeting was held the next morning. At the end of a short debate the Entente ultimatum was unanimously rejected as totally unacceptable. The coalition cabinet decided to resign with the understanding that it would be replaced by a purely socialist government.[27] Following this, the socialist executive held an emergency session. Compelled by the threat of invasion, the socialist left, joined by some of the moderates, resolved to restore the unity of the working class by coming to an immediate agreement with the imprisoned communists and joining forces with them against the impending imperialist attack. On the same afternoon Garbai took the executive's case to the Budapest Workers' Council and pleaded for its endorsement of the party's suddenly developed leftist orientation:[28]

> We must take a new direction to obtain from the East what has been denied to us by the West. We must join the stream of new events. The army of the Russian proletariat is approaching rapidly. A bourgeois government . . . will not be able to cope with these new developments. Therefore, we must bring about the peace between the Social Democrats and the Communist Party, create a Socialist government, and institute the dictatorship of the proletariat.
>
> As soon as this matter of unity is settled here, the Communist comrades immediately must be released from the prison, and tomorrow . . . we shall announce to the entire world that the proletariat of this country has taken over

[26] For the text of the Vyx *aide memoire* see Mrs. Sándor Gábor *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 5, Nov. 7, 1917–March 21, 1919, Budapest: Szikra, 1956, pp. 677–679.

[27] "Excerpts from the Minutes of the Council of Ministers, March 21, 1919," in *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 5, pp. 679–681. Károlyi had intended to nominate Kunfi to head a socialist government. His keen disappointment over the socialist-communist coalition turned to a feeling of personal insult when he was confronted with a manifesto stating, over his signature, that he, the President of the Republic, had voluntarily relinquished his powers to the "new government of the Hungarian proletariat." "I had no means of making a denial. The press was in the hands of the Socialists, and no one would have dared to publish it." Michael Károlyi, *Memoirs: Faith without Illusion,* New York: Dutton, 1957, p. 155.

[28] Quoted in Weltner, *The Documents . . .*, pp. 3–4.

the guidance of Hungary and at the same time has offered its fraternal alliance to the Soviet Russian government.

The Workers' Council approved the executive's decision without debate. Owing to last-minute maneuvering by Garami and the State Prosecutor's office, the communists were not released until the afternoon of March 21. As they emerged from their cells and were escorted back to Communist Party headquarters, the text of the socialist-communist agreement was being released to the press.[29]

According to the agreement issued jointly by the socialist executive and the communist central committee, the two parties effected an immediate merger. Other provisions included the formation of a government that would derive its powers from the councils of workers, peasants, and soldiers; cancellation of the scheduled elections for the National Assembly; the formation of an army of the proletariat; and an offer of "military and spiritual alliance" to the Russian Soviet government. News of reconciliation between the two parties of the proletariat was received with approval by the organized workers of Budapest. Soon after the first waves of enthusiasm subsided, rank-and-file socialists and communists began to press their leaders for a more detailed explanation of their sudden change of heart.

Jakab Weltner, the editor of *Népszava,* argued in presenting the socialists' case to the membership that the October revolution had "failed to fulfill socialist expectations . . . and produced only political liberties" but not the economic liberation of the proletariat, and that since differences between the two workers' parties were those of tactics but not of basic beliefs, the socialists would not be responsible for a "fratricidal war between the two . . . superficially and temporarily divided" camps of the proletariat. Moreover, the socialist party did not feel strong enough to institute the dictatorship of the proletariat by itself without some guarantees of a Russian military alliance against the Entente.[30]

Béla Kun performed a similar task on the communist side. He maintained that since the socialists had completely submitted to the communist platform as defined in his letter to Ignác Bogár, the communists had no right to refuse the opportunity to realize the dictatorship of the proletariat, that differences between the two parties had concerned degree of revolutionary will, not the desire to build "a

[29] See Appendix H for the text.

[30] Weltner, "Introduction" to *The Documents . . .*, pp. 1–3.

socialist state," and that immediate military assistance would be forthcoming from the Russian Red Army, which was "presently at the foothills of the Carpathians."[31]

It is doubtful that either of these men told the complete truth or revealed his own reservations about the alliance. It is reasonable to assume, however, that each side, in addition to its declared intentions, was motivated by another set of considerations as well. The socialists leadership, in order to avoid isolation, was forced to follow its radical masses and after much soul-searching they "chose Lenin" in preference to reformist socialism. Moreover, they were genuinely concerned for Hungary's future under an Entente occupation. On the other hand, Kun and the more responsible communists undoubtedly realized that a peaceful bloodless proletarian revolution was preferable to a repetition of the violent Russian October on the streets of Budapest, especially since the communists could not deliver on their plan of an armed uprising in a country occupied by Czech, Rumanian, and French troops. On the basis of his Russian revolutionary experience, Kun assumed that the acceptance of his platform eventually would entail a dominant communist position in the partnership with the socialists, as had been the case with the Bolsheviks in Russia.[32]

In a larger sense, the heightened radicalism within the Hungarian workers' movement, and particularly among members of the socialist elite, that climaxed with the merger may be viewed as one of gradual disillusionment with the bourgeois democracy in politics, with the survival of capitalist ownership and production in economics, and with Wilsonism and "social patriotism" in international relations. The negation of one set of discredited political, economic, and international alternatives by the Hungarian working class entailed by definition the embracing of its dialectical antitheses. That is, instead of bourgeois democracy, the socialists chose a "pure" dictatorship of the proletariat; instead of "the anarchy of capitalist production and distribution" they chose full socialization of the

[31] Béla Kun, "Speech before a Meeting of Communist Activists on March 22, 1919," *Vörös Ujság*, March 23, 1919.

[32] For a candid discussion of the communists' motives in forming a united party with the socialists see Béla Kun, "Néhány Megjegyzés Jóhiszemûek Számára: Utóhang [Some Remarks for the Naive: An Epilogue]," in *Mit Mond a III. Internacionálé a Magyarországi Proletárforradalomról* [*The Third International on the Hungarian Proletarian Revolution*], Vienna: A Kommunisták Németausztriai Pártja, 1920, pp. 25–48.

means of production and state ownership of the land; instead of Wilson's and the Second International's "social patriotism" they chose Lenin's "proletarian self-determination" and joined with the Communist International in its efforts to promote a world revolution.

It was not clear in March of 1919 whether the birth of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was merely an act of socialist desperation generated by the lack of democratic alternatives or an "objective manifestation of the dynamic laws of social revolution" in the form of the "second bulwark of the coming world revolution." This much, however, was clear. Without the October Revolution in Russia and the return of an experienced revolutionary elite to Hungary, without Béla Kun's extremely skillful application of Bolshevik tactics in the Hungarian dual-power period, and without the Entente's ill-timed *démarche,* there could have been anarchy, possibly a small-scale civil war, and probably an immediate foreign invasion, but there would not have been a Soviet Republic guided by an improbable alliance of respected labor leaders, dissident trade unionists, alienated socialist journalists, starry-eyed social reformers, hardened soldier-adventurers, and a handful of Russian-trained professional revolutionaries.

Chapter 7

THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC

Thirty-three people's commissars—seventeen socialists, fourteen communists, and two nonparty experts—of the Revolutionary Governing Council met for the first time on the morning of March 22, 1919, to launch the ship of the Soviet Hungarian state. Among these men were trade-union officials, professional revolutionaries, labor lawyers, engineers, journalists and philosophers.[1] Catapulted overnight into the red velvet chairs of the cabinet, few of the new elite could fully comprehend the magnitude of changes or the opportunities that were opened up for the people of Hungary by the communist-socialist coup.

The revolutionary leadership had little in common beyond a consensus on the outlines of an immediate action program and hopes for an eventual realization of socialism. With the exception of the communists and the technocrats, they were unprepared for the actual possession of undivided political power. Although the socialists could draw on the Hungarian Social Democratic Party's archaic program—which was said to be a verbatim translation of the German Erfurt Program of 1891—their actual governing experience had been limited to four months as members of the Károlyi government. While the technocrats did have detailed blueprints for a socialist society, these were untested, and often ambiguous statements of faith, rather than practical plans for the rapid resuscitation of the faltering economy. Thus, more by default than by design, it fell to the communists to take the lead in laying the political and economic foundation for the dictatorship of the Hungarian proletariat.

Because of the deliberate minimizing of several outstanding issues which ideologically divided the two governing partners and the rather convincing lip service paid to the "common Marxist heritage," it is difficult to distinguish between those propositions which were essentially communist and those which were held unanimously by the combined leadership. We will assume, therefore, that their

[1] For the roster of the Revolutionary Governing Council see *Budapesti Közlöny*, March 24, 1919.

alliance was based on the theses outlined in Béla Kun's letter to Ignác Bogár.

The Ideological Foundations of Communism in Hungary

One of the main ingredients of the communist and left socialist vision of a future Soviet Hungary was the implicit belief that the transition from capitalism to socialism could be accomplished in Hungary within a short period of time. Proceeding from Marx's preface to the Russian edition of the *Communist Manifesto,* the communists maintained that if Marx could concede the possibility of rapid development toward socialism on the basis of "the proliferation of communal property [*mir?*] in Russia" of the 1870s the same would certainly be more true of Hungary forty years later.[2] Both Kun, who prided himself on being a perceptive student of Marxism, and the socialists, who had viewed the Russian events from Hungary, mistook certain experimental measures (such as equal payment to manual and clerical workers, and instances of the abolition of currency by doctrinaire local soviets) introduced in the first months following the October Revolution in Russia for manifestations of a rapid transition to socialism. Considering Hungary and the organized workers infinitely more advanced and class conscious than Russia with her numerically small urban proletariat, they concluded that Hungary had already surpassed the Russian timetable, and hence was likely to be among the first to complete the building of socialism and enter communism.[3]

Besides this remarkable interpretation of Marx and the lessons of the Russian revolution, Kun's "great leap forward to communism" was buttressed by yet another set of ingenious arguments. In his opinion the recently concluded war had created a number of useful psychological and administrative precedents which could greatly contribute toward the cohesion of a society in the process of building socialism. These were increased wartime governmental interference in the lives of individuals, regimented existence and the development of a collectivist psychology among soldiers at the front and among the proletariat in the hinterland, the proliferation of state bureaucracy and its control of industrial production, and the introduction of

[2] "Are We Ready for Communism?" *Vörös Ujság,* March 28, 1919. This article was prompted by an editorial in which the German socialist *Vorwarts* had expressed doubts about the viability of the new Hungarian proletarian regime.

[3] József Pogány, "It Is Easier in Hungary," *Népszava,* April 13, 1919.

food rationing and compulsory internal passports.[4] The perpetuation and exploitation of such war miseries under the guise of "vigorous proletarian collectivism" was thus the essence of Kun's concept of the "psychological prerequisites" for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Encouraged by the lack of opposition of former exploiting classes to the takeover by the proletariat, Kun and the socialists maintained that the Hungarian bourgeoisie had realized the inherent superiority of the Soviet system and voluntarily handed over the reins of the government to the victorious proletariat.[5] In view of this evident admission of defeat, they argued, the working classes can and must obtain the totality of power and exclude every nonproletarian element from participation in the building of the socialist society. Petty bourgeois overtures such as offers of help for national defense stimulated by social patriotism or bourgeois nationalism rather than by sentiments of proletarian internationalism were to be rejected outright as attempts to desecrate the cause of world revolution. The internal administration of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was to rest on a system of soviets of workers, soldiers, and village poor as bearers of the combined legislative, executive, and judicial powers of the proletarian state.[6] The soviets—the incarnations of proletarian sovereignty—represented the first step toward the withering away of the state and its coercive apparatus. In Kun's judgment, the Hungarian worker

[4] Béla Kun, *Mit Akarnak a Kommunisták?* [*What Do the Communists Want?*], 3rd Hungarian ed., Budapest: A Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja, 1919, pp. 66–70.

[5] Lenin was not exempt from a similarly overoptimistic assessment of the victory of the Hungarian proletariat. He felt that the Hungarian example proved the universal applicability of the Russian Revolution and disproved the bourgeois contention that "revolutions are kept in power through the use of brute force." From this Lenin concluded: "Whatever difficulties may exist in Hungary, we have won a great moral victory. The most radical, most democratic, and most opportunistic bourgeoisie [of Eastern Europe?] has acknowledged that in times of great crises, when war threatens [a country] . . . there can be no other power than those of the soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat." V. I. Lenin, "Speech at the Closing Session of the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), March 23, 1919," *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], 4th ed., vol. 29, Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1951, p. 197. See also V. I. Lenin, "Report on the Domestic and Foreign Situation of the Soviet Republic April 3, 1919, Before the Plenary Session of the Moscow Soviet of Workers' and Red Army Deputies," *ibid.*, pp. 230–246. (esp. p. 244).

[6] "Temporary Constitution of the Hungarian Soviet Republic," *Tanácsköztársaság*, April 3, 1919.

was not only to follow the example of the Russian proletariat, "which unfortunately is not the most active . . . regarding its work in the soviets," but to surpass it by elevating the stature of the soviets to those of the party and the trade unions.[7]

Several indirect references and remarks dropped in the heat of debates in the Revolutionary Governing Council indicated that in the first month of the Soviet Republic Kun and the communist center deliberately downgraded the role of the party in relation to the executive organs of the state. The most obvious manifestation of this clearly un-Bolshevik approach of a deliberate lessening of party control over the government was the transformation of the respective supreme party organs—the socialist executive and the communist central committee—into the Revolutionary Governing Council.[8]

Mindful of the conservative propensities of the trade-union bureaucracy, the communists were anxious to exclude the trade unions from the policy-making process and prevent their effective participation in party affairs. "The only function of the trade unions—an extremely important and noble role—is to take the lead in guiding the society on the road from capitalism to communism. . . . The need for trade union cooperation lies . . . precisely in the fact that they unite the [technically] most advanced elements of the working class who possess the know-how, indispensable to reaching this goal."[9] On the other hand, László Rudas—who, as the official Hungarian translator of Lenin's *State and Revolution* and other Russian pamphlets, should have known better—was anxious to accommodate the trade

[7] Béla Kun, "Speech at the First Session of the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, April 15, 1919," in Institute for Party History, Central Committee, Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 6, part 1, March 21, 1919–June 11, 1919, Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 216.

[8] Between March 21 and June 11, 1919, fewer than ten sessions or parts of the Revolutionary Governing Council were devoted to party matters. The first such meeting was held on April 14, that is, more than three weeks after the March victory. It was then that Sándor Garbai, chairman of the Revolutionary Governing Council, announced, "The Revolutionary Governing Council will now come to order as the highest (decision-making) party organ." Lajos Szamel, "Kultúrális Igazgatás a Magyar Tanácsköztársaságban [Cultural Administration in the Hungarian Soviet Republic]," in Márton Sarlós (ed.), *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Állama és Joga* [*State and Law in the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1959, p. 138n. See also Tibor Hajdú, *Tanácsok Magyarországon,* 1918–1919-*ben* [*Local Soviets in Hungary*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1958, p. 191.

[9] László Rudas, "Contribution to the Trade Union Debate," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 6, part 1, p. 581.

unions. In his opinion there were no qualitative differences between the party and the unions in terms of political preparedness, degree of internal cohesion, and dedication to the cause of socialism. It is likely that this unorthodox coequation of the political and economic arms of the victorious proletariat was not merely a tactical concession to the conservative majority of the former socialist apparatus, but stemmed from a belief that one of the first steps toward the withering away of the proletarian state was the deliberate weakening of potentially competing seats of power. These were not, of course, the only attempts to redefine the functional relationships among the party, soviets, and the unions, but they were symptomatic of the prevalent ideological and semantic confusion.[10]

The united party's economic program was prepared jointly by the former socialist Jenő Varga and engineer socialists Gyula Hevesi and József Kelen (Ottó Korvin's brother). The program was founded on the belief in the inherent superiority of central planning and large-scale production over the anarchy of the capitalist market economy.[11] Since the unrestricted exercise of political power by the proletarian superstructure was held inconceivable without a complementary economic base, these men argued for the implementation of comprehensive measures of socialization. Its scope, in addition to state-owned mines, steel mills, railroads, lands, and forests, included factories and workshops employing more than twenty workers, land not cultivated by the farmer and his family, banks and savings institutions, wholesale commerce, local transportation, apartment houses, theaters, cinemas, and bath houses.[12] The main nonideological justification for

[10] Themes such as "steps indispensable to the transformation of the dictatorship of the proletariat into an all-people's state" were given wide currency during the first half of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Of the more than 160 lectures sponsored by the Propaganda Section for Young Workers, People's Commissariat for Public Education, more than 90 were concerned with various "practical problems of society under communism." "Report of Propaganda Section for Young Workers, People's Commissariat for Public Education," in *ibid.*, pp. 282–286.

[11] Gyula Hevesi, *Szociális Termelés. A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Iparpolitikája* [*Social Production: Industrial Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Kiadó, 1959. See also Eugene Varga, *La Dictature du Proletariat: Problemes Economiques,* Paris: *l'Humanité,* 1922.

[12] Subsequent socialization measures involved private libraries, bathtubs (to be used once a week by members of an assigned proletarian family), works of art, jewelry, Oriental rugs, furniture, pianos, bicycles, microscopes, and stamp collections. Most of these valuables were deposited in government warehouses and exhibited in museums and public buildings. However, in certain more vigorously socialized bourgeois homes only the bathtub and immovable furniture were found after the fall of the Kun regime.

the immediate socialization of industry and land was twofold: "to ensure the continuity of production" and "to guarantee adequate food supplies to the urban proletariat." Such unabashed admissions of the absolute primacy of proletarian interests over those of the rural countryside well reflected the deeply ingrained antipeasant views of the socialist leadership and of the Budapest intellectuals who manned the party's meager rural agitprop section in the first month of the revolution.

The appointment of Béla Kun as People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs—a post which he held throughout the 133-day Hungarian Soviet Republic—was symbolic of the government's Russian orientation. The socialists, who had been well-informed as to the source of Kun's apparently inexhaustible propaganda war chest and knew of the communists' forays into Slovakia,[13] accepted him as a prominent Bolshevik agent who could secure military assistance and diplomatic support from Russia.[14] Kun's presumed intimacy with Lenin's plans for a world revolution, his familiarity with the new generation of Russian-trained communist leaders in Rumania, Serbia, and Slovakia, and his direct access to the left socialist elements of the Western European workers' parties were considered additional positive qualifications.

Next to hopes of military aid from Russia, Hungary's foreign policy hinged on the immediate outbreak of world revolution first in Central Europe, and subsequently in Germany, France, and Italy.

[13] At the end of December, 1918, Jenő László and Gábor Kohn, with the help of Slovak communists who had formerly belonged to Kun's Federation of Foreign Groups in Russia, organized the shortest soviet republic on record: it lasted about thirty-six hours in the city of Bratislava before being suppressed by Czech troops.

[14] Socialist hopes for Russian military intervention on behalf of a proletarian government in Hungary must have been one of Kun's greatest bargaining assets during the unity conference in the city prison. They were a liability, however, as far as the Entente was concerned, and on March 24 Kun felt compelled to issue a statement explaining Hungary's new foreign-policy orientation, and particularly her offer of allegiance to Russia: "By asking Russia to enter the alliance with the Republic of the Councils of Hungary, the Government has not thought that this step might be interpreted as an expression of its desires to break all diplomatic intercourse with the Powers of the Entente, and still less as a declaration of war on the Entente. The alliance with Russia is not a formal diplomatic alliance; it is at the most, if we may use the expression, an 'entente cordiale,' a natural friendship justified by the identical construction of their respective constitutions, which in the thought of the Hungarian Government does not in any way imply an aggressive combination. The new Hungarian Republic, on the contrary, has a firm desire to live in peace with all the other Nations and to devote its activities to the peaceful reorganisation of its country." *The World War,* suppl. 1 of *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1918, vol. 5, p. 18.

The Hungarian leaders entertained no illusions regarding the long-range chances of an isolated revolutionary center encircled by the forces of imperialism. On the other hand, they were convinced that the revolution provided Hungary with a historic opportunity for self-liberation which, if missed, would not present itself after the receding of the current revolutionary wave.[15] Kun correctly insisted that Hungary's only alternative to the dictatorship of the proletariat was an Entente invasion:[16]

> To those who say that the dictatorship of the proletariat in Hungary is but sheer gambling on the coming of the world revolution, I have only this to ask: Which is the game of chance—to place ourselves firmly behind the international revolution of the proletariat or to lay the country's fortunes on the altar of Wilsonian pacifism?

From the very beginning high hopes were placed on propaganda among the organized workers of the Successor States and Austria and subversion in the Entente army. Through the Budapest-based nationality sections of the Communist Party of Hungary, well-financed teams of agitators with abundant supplies of Rumanian- and Slovak-language propaganda material were dispatched to Serbian-occupied southern Hungary, western Transylvania, and western Slovakia. The task of these teams was to engineer splits in socialist parties, organize communist cells, promote strikes in industry and transportation, and generally to hinder military preparations against Hungary.[17]

[15] There was complete unanimity among socialists and communists on this point. In justifying the seizure of power Kun was fond of quoting from the "Critique of the Gotha Program": "Every step of actual movement is more important than a dozen programs." Zinoviev was even more emphatic in this respect: "The working class cannot win power too early. This is what Kautsky said ten years ago, when he still was a socialist. This is what we say at the present. The working class cannot proclaim dictatorship too soon. The position [*sic*] is ripe for the triumph of socialism. The dictatorship of the proletariat is the order of the day throughout the civilized world. All our present failures will seem to us but paltry affairs a few months hence, as compared with the great victories we shall have achieved by that time." Grigory Zinoviev, "Vistas of the Proletarian Revolution," *The Communist International,* vol. 1, no. 1, May 1, 1919, pp. 46–47.

[16] Béla Kun, "On the Unity of the Proletariat," *Népszava,* March 30, 1919.

[17] László Rudas, Kun's emissary to the First Congress of the Communist International, advanced a similar argument for such revolutionary forays into the capitalist camp: "The new socialist party is now backed by the whole body of the proletariat; owing to the weakness of the bourgeoisie and the strength [of the proletariat] the revolution was a bloodless one—the Entente alone may endeavor to help the pitiable counterrevolutionary groups. But the new imperialistic states by which we are now surrounded will have their hands full with counteracting the formidable strength of the revolutionary and communistic ideas within their own boundaries." László Rudas, "The Proletarian Revolution in Hungary," *The Communist International,* vol. 1, no. 1, May 1, 1919, p. 55.

Communist Hungary's self-appointed and Moscow-inspired task as the center for the spreading of world revolution in Eastern Europe was buttressed by Kun's own version of nationality policies inside the new proletarian state. So far as can be ascertained from the veritable flood of early declarations on the subject, Kun hoped to win over the Slovak, Ruthenian, and German minorities by transforming Hungary into a federated Soviet Republic. Drawing on the appropriate section of the 1918 Russian constitution, Kun, in return for a Hungarian-run system of centralized administrative controls, was willing to grant local economic autonomy to nationality groups, except for the right of secession from Hungary. The Transylvanian-born Kun, however, failed to extend similar privileges to the Rumanian minorities, whom he summarily labeled "hirelings of Rumanian boyars." Such emotional nationalistic inconsistencies notwithstanding, Kun and the Magyarized People's Commissars in charge of nationality affairs were deeply convinced that the intrinsic attractiveness of the Hungarian federal formula would present a superior alternative to the peoples of the Successor States currently suffering under the dictatorship of "Czech imperialists, Rumanian boyars, and Serbian zhupans."

Hungarian efforts to export revolution were not confined to Eastern Europe. Acting in the best tradition of the Russian missions in Western Europe, the Hungarian embassy in Vienna—the country's only properly accredited representation abroad—was turned into a beachhead of communist propaganda and internal subversion in Austria. Elek Bolgár, the Hungarian envoy, and later Ernő Bettelheim, a self-appointed revolution maker, worked in close cooperation with the Austrian communists and financed their activities to the tune of several million (not yet inflated) crowns per month. Although the Austrian police once captured a four-man team of Hungarian agents carrying several caches of gold to Berlin, it can be assumed that other gold shipments did arrive to help the Spartacus League in Germany.[18]

Views on the economic corollaries of a world revolution were somewhat loosely derived from Lenin's theses on imperialism. According to this reasoning, the postwar capitalist world was in the midst of a historically unparalleled crisis from which it would not recover short of the continuation of imperialist ventures against the

[18] Gusztáv Gratz, *A Bolsevizmus Magyarországon* [*Bolshevism in Hungary*], Budapest: Franklin, 1921, pp. 152–154.

emerging system of world communism.[19] Imperialist wars would in turn aggravate the domestic situation in capitalist countries, sharpen class struggle, and escalate it into an armed uprising, and thence a proletarian revolution.[20]

It is difficult to find a rational explanation for this patchwork quilt of dogmatic armchair socialism, shrewd psychology, faulty logic, messianic zeal, and cunning schemes that comprised the leading ideological and pragmatic assumptions of the first month of the Hungarian revolution. The nature of the socialist-communist merger offers one clue to the matter. The socialists had become allied with the communists to preserve the unity of the working class and to save Hungary from foreign invasion. The communists had joined forces with the socialists to further the course of world revolution by the establishment of a Soviet Republic in Hungary. Both assumptions depended on Russian aid and the outbreak of revolutions abroad. Whether it was self-delusion, greed for power, lack of information, the public reaction to the communist revolutionary propaganda, or possibly all four, the fact remains that the revolutionary leadership implicitly accepted both eventualities as future certainties. These psychological crutches, irrational and farfetched as they might have been, were the most important ingredients of what may be called "the will to revolution."

The second main source of these peculiar assumptions was the unreconciled dichotomy between nationalism and proletarian internationalism which were the two major psychological moving forces of the revolution. There is little doubt that under the thin veneer of Marxist socialism the socialists were unreconstructed "social patriots" who considered Hungary's territorial integrity far more important than furthering Russia's interests in Eastern Europe. The communists, while certainly not free of similar ambitions, had a great deal less personal stake in the maintenance of Hungary as an independent territorial entity. To a large extent they had purged themselves of sentiments of patriotism and national tradition and were totally unconcerned about the nonproletarian majority of the population. However, both parties had been thrown to the summit of power as a result of a tidal wave of nationalist sentiment, and the communists were

19 Gyula Alpári, "Az Imperializmus: Előadás 1919, Junius 10 [Imperialism: A Lecture Delivered on June 10, 1919]," *Válogatott Irásai* [*Selected Writings*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1960, pp. 198–217.

20 "The Paris Conference," *Népszava,* April 1, 1919.

forced to join in the clamor and as wielders of authority provide a purposeful direction to it. Thus, partly because of this nationalist mandate and partly because the revolution was won without armed bourgeois opposition, the communists had to improvise on their original premises. By understating the necessity of internal class war and calling the essentially "social patriotic" enterprise of Hungary's defense "a war of national liberation from Entente imperialism," they chose the only feasible alternative to a futile intraparty struggle over the ideological purity of the revolution. Since one compromise of principle usually breeds another, the consequence of this opportunistic concession was the price of the communists' ascendency to power.[21]

Coalition Politics in the Hungarian Soviet Republic

Exactly one week after Kun and the socialists signed the "Documents of Unity" creating the new Hungarian Socialist Party, *Népszava* issued an announcement stating that "the liquidation of the Communist Party of Hungary and the Hungarian Social Democratic Party" had been completed and added that "anyone who henceforth claims to act on behalf of either the communists or the socialists will be exposed as a fraud."[22] Actually, the announcement should have read that it took the Hungarian Social Democratic Party seven days to fully absorb the Communist Party's secretariat, agitprop apparatus, and network of clandestine factory cells.

[21] It is interesting to note that neither Kun and Zinoviev nor the socialists cared to remember at this point Engels' classic warning about the premature seizure of power by a revolutionary elite: "The worst thing that can befall a leader of an extreme party is to be compelled to take over a government in an epoch when the movement is not yet ripe for the domination of the class he represents and for the realization of the measures which that domination implies. What he *can* do depends not upon his will but upon the degree of contradiction between the various classes, and upon the level of development of the material means of existence . . . upon which class contradictions always repose. What he *ought* to do, what his party demands of him, again depends not upon him or the stage of development of the class struggle and its conditions. He is bound to the doctrines and demands hitherto propounded . . . thus he necessarily finds himself in an unsolvable dilemma. What he *can* do contradicts all his previous actions, principles, and the immediate interests of his party, and what he *ought* to do cannot be done. In a word, he is compelled to represent not his party or his class, but the class for whose domination the movement is then ripe. . . . Whoever is put into this awkward position is irrevocably lost." Friedrich Engels, "Peasant War in Germany," in Lewis S. Feuer (ed.), *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy*, New York: Doubleday, 1959, p. 435.

[22] *Népszava,* March 28, 1919.

Was not the loss of the Communist Party's separate identity an excessive price to pay for the dubious honor of sharing the power with the suddenly cooperative social democrats? Was not Kun overly eager in accommodating the socialists who allegedly accepted the communist platform yet deferred judgment on the party's name? Could there have been another way to win the revolution without abandoning nearly everything that had helped to make the communists strong?[23] Lenin, who had been notified by Kun of the peaceful victory, raised similar questions:[24]

> Please inform me of what actual guarantees you have that the new Hungarian government will be really communist and not simply a socialist government, that is, one of the traitors of Socialism?
>
> Do the communists have a majority in the government? When will the congress of soviets convene? What does it really mean that the socialists acknowledged the dictatorship of the proletariat?
>
> Undoubtedly it would be a mistake merely to imitate every detail of our Russian tactics under the peculiar conditions of the Hungarian revolution. I must warn you of this . . . and I would like to know wherein you see the actual guarantees.

Kun's reply to Lenin was equivocal concerning the political and ideological soundness of the socialist-communist merger:[25]

> The Hungarian Social Democratic Party center and left wing accepted my platform. This platform strictly adheres to the principles of proletarian dictatorship and of the soviet system. It is identical to the principles of the Bukharin theses and is in complete harmony with the Leninist theses on dictatorship.
>
> The Socialist right wing . . . Ernő Garami . . . Gyula Peidl . . . and [Manó] Buchinger . . . broke with the party without taking any followers with them. The very best forces that ever existed in the Hungarian workers' movement now participate in the government, which, since there are no real workers' and peasants' soviets [in Hungary], holds the power, as was the case in Russia when the soldiers' committees kept order. There is a directorium [inner presi-

[23] V. Miroshevski, a Stalinist Soviet historian, ten years later described this process as a direct consequence of Kun's "Luxemburgist" disregard of the political potentials of the "organizational weapon," that is, the party's vanguard character and organizational integrity in the period immediately following the victorious proletarian revolution. V. Miroshevski, "Vengerskaia Sovetskaia Respublika [The Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Proletarskaia Revolutsiia,* no. 11 (94), 1929, p. 75.

[24] V. I. Lenin, "Text of Radiotelegram to Béla Kun, March 23, 1919," *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], 3rd ed., vol. 25, Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1931, p. 203.

[25] "Radio Message from Comrade Béla Kun," *Pravda,* March 28, 1919.

dium] within the government; [its members are] myself and [Béla] Vágó from the Communist Party; [Jenő] Landler (who was imprisoned during the war) and Pogány (who belonged to us before the merger). . . . They had been in fact our representatives in the Socialist left; and [Zsigmond] Kunfi, who is someone like your Lunacharsky. My personal influence over the Revolutionary Governing Council is such that the firm dictatorship of the proletariat will be assured. Also, the masses are behind me. . . .

On the basis of available evidence, it is doubtful that Kun himself believed everything he wrote to allay Lenin's suspicions. This tends to be supported by Béla Szántó, to whom Kun confided his doubts about the merger on the very next day: "This thing went too smoothly. I could not sleep all night. I kept wondering where we made the mistake, because something is wrong here. It went too smoothly! We will find out, but I am afraid it will be too late. . . ."[26] It is obvious from transcripts of the earliest sessions of the Revolutionary Governing Council that Kun did not have as much control as he claimed. Nor was it true that the leading stipulations of the merger fully adhered to Bukharin's and Lenin's theses on the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin, who had spent a lifetime teaching the doctrine of a tightly disciplined vanguard of the proletariat, and who often refused to make concessions on lesser issues than the elite character of the party, would have certainly vetoed the project outright had he been consulted in advance. Moscow, however, was far from Red Budapest, and the ambitious Kun was not yet ready to disturb the leader of the world revolution with his tormenting doubts. The die had been cast.

It soon became apparent that the "Leninist norms of party life" were not without followers in Hungary. József Révai, in his memoirs, gives this account of his and his comrades' reaction to the socialist-communist merger:[27]

I can still vividly recall the bewilderment and profound shock of the "old communists" when they heard about the pact in the prison uniting the two parties. Kun [and his group in the prison] who . . . signed the "Documents of Unity" in behalf of the Communist Party felt this too . . . and also that without the unity and support of the "old communists," only the Right Social Democrats could profit from the unification of the two parties. Therefore—as it had

[26] Béla Szántó, "Emlékezés a Magyar Tanácsköztársaságra [The Hungarian Soviet Republic]" (excerpts from unpublished memoirs), *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* vol. 4, no. 1, 1959, p. 132.

[27] József Révai, "Foreword" to Borbála Szerémi (ed.), *Nagy Idők Tanui Emlékeznek* [*Heroic Times Remembered*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 13.

happened a few months before on the question of the party's foundation—they conducted a "man-to-man" agitation campaign with every "old communist" trying to have them accept their thesis of the inevitability and necessity of the merger with the Social Democrats.

Révai and the leading members of what later became known as "left communist opposition" remained convinced that the unification was not only "immoral," but, as Szamuely put it, "spelled the doom of the Soviet Republic" as well.[28]

The origins of this left opposition may be traced back to the second central committee which had taken over the party apparatus after the imprisonment of Kun and the "Bolshevik hard-core" hand-picked central committee. For a month Szamuely, Révai, Bettelheim, Bolgár, and Lukács had made the day-to-day decisions, edited *Vörös Ujság,* written propaganda leaflets, and organized mass meetings. Without Kun's knowledge, they had begun extensive preparations for an armed uprising in May. According to the plans, as revealed by Nánássy (who broke down during police interrogation), the May uprising was to start with a general strike, followed by an armed uprising, the execution of bourgeois hostages, and a three-day rule of the Budapest *Lumpenproletariat.* At the end, the party's own army and the communist-led sailors' detachments would restore order and form a proletarian republic.[29] The second central committee was convinced that a proletarian revolution had to be won on blood-stained streets and smoldering barricades rather than at a conference table in the Budapest city prison. Led by the terrorist Szamuely (who, in opposition to Rosa Luxemburg, had argued for an armed Spartacist uprising before he left Berlin for Budapest at the end of December, 1918), these doctrinaire middle-class communists were supremely confident of the exclusive correctness of their strategy.

The leftists were further incensed by the fact that in bringing about the merger Vágó, Kun, and their Hungarian Bolshevik friends had neglected to consult them on the impending agreement with the socialists. Apparently not only the second central committee, but also the rest of the imprisoned first central committee, was kept in the dark

[28] Quoted in Gyula Hevesi, *Egy Mérnök a Forradalomban* [*An Engineer in the Revolution*], Budapest: Europa, 1959, p. 228. For a systematic statement of the leftists' position concerning the "unprincipled socialist-communist merger," see Mózes Gábor, "Doklad o Padenii Sovetskoi Vlasti v Vengrii [Report on the Fall of the Soviets' Rule in Hungary]," *Kommunisticheski Internatsional,* vol. 2, no. 7–8, November–December, 1919, pp. 1159–1166.

[29] The confession was reported in the Budapest press on Feb. 27, 1919.

about these vitally important negotiations.[30] Among those who subsequently joined the left opposition for this reason were Rákosi, Béla Szántó, the former independent socialists, Ottó Korvin, Jenő László, and László Rudas, who was en route to the first Comintern Congress in Moscow at the time.

The division of spoils was another bone of contention for the frustrated opposition. The roster of the Revolutionary Governing Council included twelve full and twenty-one deputy people's commissars. Of these, Kun was a full people's commissar and seven communists were appointed as deputies. The left extremists considered anything less than a fifty-fifty distribution of key positions an injustice to the Communist Party. To add insult to injury, most of the communists were expected to serve under socialists with whom they had had personal feuds of long standing. Particularly strong bitterness existed between the Szamuely-Vágó-Rákosi team and Pogány, between Lukács and Kunfi, and between Szamuely and Böhm. In an effort to redress the unfavorable balance of power in the government, the communists first moved against Pogány, who had the most enemies. On April 3, at the instigation of Szamuely and Szántó (Pogány's own Deputy People's Commissars of War), unruly soldiers' units marched before the building of the commissariat and demanded Pogány's immediate resignation. Pogány, who had engineered the removal of three Ministers of War in November and December, 1918, was defeated by his own weapon and was forced to resign.[31]

[30] On the communist side the agreement was signed by Béla Kun, Béla Vágó, Ferenc Jancsik, and Ede Chlepkó and was later cosigned by Károly Vántus, Ernő Seidler, and József Rabinovits. Thus, except for Vágó and Chlepkó, who were admirers of Kun, the agreement was executed exclusively by the Russian-trained "Hungarian Bolshevik hard core." Szántó, "The Hungarian . . . ," p. 132.

[31] "Minutes of the Revolutionary Governing Council of April 3, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 6, part 1, p. 115. Forty years later at least one of the anti-Pogány plotters, Gyula Hajdú, had second thoughts about the wisdom of Pogány's forcible removal from his commissariat: "Take Pogány's example . . . the entire communist party loathed him. He was a centrist [in the fall of 1918], who openly derided the communists by calling them left counterrevolutionaries . . . therefore a group of communist comrades organized a demonstration and caused Pogány's downfall as Commissar of War. [The plotters] would have liked to have [Béla] Szántó or Szamuely for commissar, but the [plan] failed and Böhm became the commander of the [Red] Army and also the Commissar of War. Then what happened? [Böhm's] subsequent activities proved Pogány a procommunist in his own fashion, but Böhm behaved like a traitor as the head of the Red Army. Therefore, I must say that Pogány should not have been unseated. . . ." "Vita Magyarországi Munkásmozgalom, 1917–1919-ig Cimű Tankönyvről [Debate on the Draft of the Textbook on the History of Hungarian Workers' Movement between 1917 and 1919]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 3, 1958, p. 181.

Kun quickly exploited the situation and pressed for a major overhaul of the government—including the abolition of any distinction between full and deputy ranks in the Revolutionary Governing Council. The socialists, though they had little sympathy for Pogány, demanded guarantees against the recurrence of such underhanded tactics which tended to jeopardize working-class unity. Kun, who had had no advanced knowledge of the planned anti-Pogány vendetta, also began to regard the Szamuely group as potentially dangerous competitors for the leadership of the united party. The solution to the governmental crisis suited both Kun and the socialists but offered small comfort to the extreme left. Pogány was transferred to the foreign-propaganda department of Kun's commissariat, and Szamuely was appointed as one of three government commissioners in charge of housing problems of the Budapest proletariat.[32]

The internal polarization of communist ranks that had begun in late February also produced a right wing. This group did not constitute an opposition in the same sense as the left, nor was it organized, as were the former leaders of the second central committee. The right was made up of a diverse group of middle-class intellectuals, students, and syndicalist-worker disciples of Ervin Szabó. With the exception of the last group, the activities of the right were essentially ideological and were motivated by the desire to mitigate some of the offensive aspects of Marxist orthodoxy and Bolshevik rigidity as represented by the left and the center.[33]

The syndicalists, many of whom had entered into an alliance of convenience with the communists in order to overthrow the majority-socialist party bureaucracy, realized that the new "party government" was not appreciably different from its predecessor. They felt that the powers of the Revolutionary Governing Council were excessive and, if not shared with other proletarian organizations, would soon deteriorate into uncontrolled despotism. For the syndicalists the legitimate holders of proletarian sovereignty were the workers' councils, which, they maintained, were entitled to full supervisory powers over the party leadership. It was not long before they saw their cherished ideals defeated by the united party's oligarchy. On April 7, 1919, elections were held for the Budapest Council of Workers' and Sol-

[32] Szamuely was also entrusted with the vital task of supervising preparations for a May Day spectacular in the capitol.

[33] For factionalist purposes the center is defined here as consisting of Kun, his Hungarian Bolshevik followers (except Szamuely), Béla Vágó, Jenő Landler, Sándor Garbai (the president of the Revolutionary Governing Council), and several leftist-socialist *apparatchiki* who at critical moments usually sided with Kun.

diers' Deputies. The syndicalist-controlled Budapest Eighth district elected a slate consisting solely of syndicalist and anarchist write-in deputies in place of the single-party ticket.[34] The Revolutionary Governing Council voided the results of the election and a week later the official slate "won." Still, the syndicalist right had made its point, and with this single act of defiance created a heritage for anti-party dissent in the Workers' Council, which became, in effect, a highly critical "workers' parliament" in relation to the party and government autocracy.[35]

Another shortlived but less effectual opposition group consisted of leftist Galileist students. The group had originated in late February as a new left socialist opposition to fill the void left by the arrested communists. Their creed called for "uncompromising opposition, which, unlike the Social Democratic Party, does not stand on the platform of dictatorship but on the principles of democracy, and strives for . . . constructive socialist policies."[36] Within a few weeks after the March events the group's political ambitions faded away upon witnessing the emergence of the proletarian secret police and the revival of the very same party bureaucracy—now disguised as administrative organs of the government—which it had hoped to unseat. Resorting to a tested pattern, the group transformed itself into an economic pressure group of young university students, and with this the Galileist movement—the original training school for Hungarian reformers and revolutionaries—came to an untimely end in early April, 1919.

György Lukács' theory on the institutional consequences of proletarian unity represented the third and potentially most destructive right communist deviation. Lukács, who had appointed himself official interpreter of the ideological meaning of the socialist-communist merger, advanced these propositions: "The proletarian party is a transitory phenomenon" (historic category) which has grown out of a particular historic context whereby "the proletariat has become

[34] Ten years earlier the same party district, under the flag of intraparty democracy, had supported Gyula Alpári's three-year-long fight against the "socialist trade-union bureaucracy."

[35] Not even the heavy editing of the transcripts of the proceedings of the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies could conceal the essentially anti-authoritarian character of this body. Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 6, part 1, pp. 184, 215–218, 260, esp. 390–404.

[36] Excerpts from the platform proposal are given in Márta Tömöri, *Uj Vizeken Járok. A. Galilei Kör Története* [*A History of the Galileo Circle*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1960, p. 163.

too strong to withdraw from the political arena . . . and is not yet strong enough to force its will and interests upon the society. The external organizational expression of this internal contradiction is the party." At this stage the conduct of the proletariat is characterized by "a haziness of class consciousness" which, in turn, is "the *raison d'être* of organized party activities." The appearance of the Communist Party "represented a radical break with the party forms of action," being the first step toward dissolving the "dialetical contradiction between the real goals and opportunities of the activities of the proletariat as a *class* and the *party limitations* within which these actions had been possible." From this it follows that on March 21, when the two parties united, "both the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Hungary—having discarded their decaying party forms—lost their right to legitimate existence and created a new synthesis of the organized dictatorship of the united proletariat. . . . If the product of this merger is called 'party' then the word 'party' has an entirely different meaning now."[37]

Lukács, Ervin Sinkó, and several other young communist intellectuals felt that the dissolution of the "party form" also entailed the elimination of organized class terror (whether perpetrated by the political police or meted out by a revolutionary court in the form of capital punishment).[38] Although it cannot be documented, personal information from contemporaries indicates that Lukács and his friends were instrumental in introducing prohibition of the consumption of alcoholic beverages and the abolition of land taxes.[39] Justifica-

[37] György Lukács, *Taktika és Ethika* [*Tactics and Ethics*], esp. chap. 4, "Párt és Osztály [Party and Class]," Budapest: Közoktatási Népbiztosság Kiadása, 1919, pp. 33–40. While in exile (and many more times during the next forty years), Lukács was forced to disown the theses propounded in this essay. György Lukács, "Önkritika [Self-criticism]," *Proletár* (Vienna) no. 7, Aug. 12, 1920, p. 13.

[38] The best examples of "revolutionary humanism" were Lukács' protests in April and May against taking bourgeois hostages, and the Sinkó episode in June. After the June 24 riots in Budapest several military-school cadet participants were arrested. Instead of being executed for treason, the young students were obliged (at Sinkó's insistence) to take part in a month-long Marxist seminar, personally conducted by him. See also Lajos Kassák, *Kommün* [*The Commune*], vol. 8 of *Egy Ember Élete* [*A Man's Life*] (an autobiography), Budapest: Pantheon, n.d., p. 129.

[39] Although the authorship of the pamphlet "Meghalt az Adó—Nincs Több Végrehajtó [The Taxes Are Dead—the Auctioneer Is No More]," Budapest: Közoktatási Népbiztosság Kiadása, 1919, has never been established, various sources credit Lukács with this novel idea. The antialcohol campaign was also strongly supported by the Feminists' League, the traditionally antialcoholist socialist organizers and shop stewards, and several middle-class reform groups.

tion of the first stemmed from environmental reasons ("the workers drank under capitalism because of low pay and frustration of not being able to revolt") and of the second from "political expediency" in order to pacify and win over the peasantry. The results were disastrous: the morale of the wine-drinking miners, building and construction workers, and the entire proletariat for that matter, suffered beyond measure—as did industrial production, roadwork, and the harvesting of crops. As Jenő Varga later explained it, the abolition of land taxes was designed to "create sympathy for the Hungarian government. We were disappointed in this expectation. The counterrevolutionary propaganda interpreted the cancellation of taxes as a step preliminary to the government taking away the land as well. The peasantry did not consider a government strong and legitimate if it voluntarily renounced its traditional claim for taxes."[40]

Struggle for Power in the Hungarian Soviet Republic

One of the implicit assumptions behind Béla Kun's willingness to ally the Communist Party with the socialists was his belief in the inevitable increase in the radicalism of the working classes and particularly of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party apparatus. This expected shift to the left would force the socialist leadership either to adopt "principled communist positions" or to become "Hungarian Mensheviks" and be gradually removed from the seats of power. Kun's strategem presupposed a fully united communist elite behind the party's leader, as had been the case during the communists' uphill struggle in the bourgeois-democratic revolution. He failed to realize that this apparent communist unity had probably resulted more from personal motives (grudges against one or more individuals in the socialist organization, the trade-union bureaucracy, or the state administration; greed for power and material gain) than from a reasoned, selfless commitment to the ideas of socialism and proletarian revolution. A false sense of party unity was also furthered by the lack of alternatives for men who had found themselves unable to participate in or gain control of any legitimate locus of power within the party, the unions, or the democratized state bureaucracy. Kun did not take into consideration the fact that with elimination of the sources of personal frustration a corresponding portion of motivation to party unity would disappear as well. Such radically changed

[40]Jenő Varga, *A Földkérdés a Magyar Proletárforradalomban* [*The Land Question in the Hungarian Proletarian Revolution*], Ekaterinburg: Tsentralnoe Biuro Vengerskoi Sektsii pri Ts. K. R.K.P.(b), 1920, p. 10.

circumstances as the sudden leap from prison to partnership in the cabinet were more than disconcerting to those whose commitment to the communist cause had been primarily ideological in nature. Many who had been able to work harmoniously within limits of "party forms" for the essentially negativistic goal of destroying the decaying building of capitalism found themselves greatly handicapped by the responsibilities of power.

It is conceivable that intraparty differences stemming from an *a priori* unevenness in the quality of ideological commitment could have been contained or minimized had Kun not traded away the party's organizational identity for a share of ruling power. It is also possible that the bolstering of a minority position in a socialist-communist coalition government by a separate Communist Party would have precluded the emergence of internal disunity and would have strengthened Kun's dominant position in the party. The Communist Party with its organization absorbed by the socialist machine and weakened by factionalist activities of left and right opposition groups was not the solid political instrument Kun had envisaged. Still, the business of the Soviet Republic had to go on and the proletarian dictatorship kept alive until Russian aid or the spreading of world revolution brought relief and permitted the recapture of positions lost to the socialists at the merger. Consequently, taking into account communist weaknesses in the coalition, Kun was forced into a radically revised strategy toward the socialists and the dissidents in his own party.

First, with the help of his prisoner-of-war group and Béla Vágó and with the cooperation of Landler, Garbai, and Böhm, Kun gradually excluded the leftists from sensitive positions in the Revolutionary Governing Council. In exchange for exiling the leftists to the peripheries of power he hoped to extract concessions from the socialists in terms of major policy decisions. On the other hand, by tolerating (and probably tacitly encouraging) continued extremist activities—particularly those of the terrorist units and of the ultraradical *Vörös Ujság*—Kun planned to pressure the moderate socialists in the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and in the trade unions into adopting "compromise" positions more to the left than they had originally intended.

Second, having thus established his bargaining position in the government, Kun and the communist center began a subtle but determined campaign to "Bolshevize" the "commanding heights of power" in order to recoup the initial losses suffered in the merger.

The ensuing struggle for power was carried on at three levels (the Revolutionary Governing Council, the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, and the Hungarian Socialist Party), each corresponding to a decisive locus of authority in the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

The Revolutionary Governing Council

In establishing the "lowest common denominator" of consensus among members of the Revolutionary Governing Council concerning the internal and external goals of the newly established proletarian state, most of the initial positions originated with the communists, who in the previous four months had prepared a number of specific proposals concerning socialization, local administration, army reorganization, and welfare measures. On certain issues the communists were bound by pledges made in the heat of their campaign against the socialists. Representatives of the disabled veterans' association, to whom the Communist Party had promised 5,400 crowns severance pay, were told when they approached Kun in late March, ". . . if you do not put an end to this nonsense, you will get 5,400 bullets instead of 5,400 crowns!"[41] However, other claimants could not be dismissed as easily as the crippled soldiers or the unemployed, whose association was disbanded soon after the coalition took power. The government was obliged, for example, to grant another 20 per cent cut in rents for the urban population and to authorize a 40 per cent boost in industrial wages.[42] The introduction of an eight-hour work day and the abolition of piecework rates in industry completed the first round of concessions made by the Revolutionary Governing Council to the victorious proletariat.[43]

[41] Vilmos Böhm, *Két Forradalom Tüzében* [*In the Crossfire of Two Revolutions*], Vienna: Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1923, p. 269; and Katalin Petrák and György Milei (eds.), *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Szociálpolitikája. Válogatott Rendeletek, Dokumentumok, Cikkek* [Social Welfare Policies in the Hungarian Soviet Republic: *Selected Decrees, Documents, and Articles*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1959.

[42] Dezső Nemes, *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Jelentősége és Történelmi Hatása* [*The Hungarian Soviet Republic: Its Impact and Historic Significance*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1960, p. 26.

[43] Iulius [Gyula] Hevesi, "Ekonomicheskaia Revolutsiia v Vengrii [Economic Revolution in Hungary]," *Kommunisticheski Internatsional*, vol. 1, no. 3, July, 1919, p. 315; Gergely Dömötör, "A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Hadigazdasága I [Military Economy of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, part I]," *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1956, esp. pp. 140–148; and M. F. Lebovics [Lebovich], "A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Iparának és Pénzűgyének Szocialista Átalakitásáról [On the Financial and Industrial Transformation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1959, pp. 51–66.

The communists were to learn—most often at their own expense —that governing a militarily defeated, economically bankrupt country with a starving population required a great deal more effort than the mere stroke of a pen in order to turn a maximalist communist social, economic, and cultural program into reality in a matter of a few short weeks.[44] The combination of Béla Kun's ignorance of economic planning and the technocrats' (Hevesi, Kelen) missionary zeal in implementing comprehensive socialization measures in industry and transportation placed the communists in a most awkward position in relation to the economically well-informed socialist members of the cabinet. The socialization debate in the Revolutionary Council shows typical positions taken by each side when discussing similarly conceived ambitious communist suggestions:[45]

> At the end of March the report of the Third International's congress became available that included the results of the Russian socialization program and the new guiding principles of economic organization. The social democrats in the Governing Council were in the curious position of having to defend the Russian lessons and the Comintern's guiding principles *from* the Communists.
>
> We argued that according to the report of the Soviet Russian government, besides the thousands of worker-controlled factories, only 560 plants had been socialized up to March, 1919—that is, during the first eighteen months of the revolution. . . . The production was gravely interrupted in Russia as a result of the takeovers . . . therefore, we must learn from the Russian experience and not allow any interruption of production.

The communist scheme for establishing a "proletarian class army" fared no better. One of Pogány's first acts, as People's Com-

[44] Mátyás Rákosi, for example, was to learn that full-scale nationalization of all commercial enterprises (including nearly everything but barber shops and the roast-chestnut vendors) entailed serious consequences and tended to alienate many otherwise favorably disposed petty-bourgeois elements from the Soviet Republic. This particular decree was revoked on the following day (March 25, 1919), but the damage had been done. During his trial in 1935 Rákosi disclaimed responsibility for having issued this sweeping nationalization decree and named Hevesi as the author of the ill-fated measure. Institute for the [History of] Hungarian Working-class Movements, *A Rákosi-Per* [*The Rákosi Trial(s)*], 4th ed., Budapest: Szikra, 1950, p. 305.

[45] Böhm, *In the Crossfire . . .*, pp. 274–275. Kun, evidently taken aback by the socialists' arguments, cabled his Soviet counterpart Chicherin, asking him to collect a complete set of Russian decrees, executive directives, and all available copies of the government newspaper *Izvestiia* published since October, 1917. Kun requested the material to be sent to a Ukrainian airfield, where his courier plane might pick up these important records of revolutionary wisdom. Mrs. Sándor Gábor (ed.), "Dokumentumok Szovjet-Oroszország és a Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Kapcsolatairól [Documents on the Foreign Relations of Soviet Russia and the Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1961, p. 219.

missar of War, was to dismiss all nonproletarian personnel from the army and abolish conscription. The subsequent recruiting campaign aimed at workers and landless peasants was a total failure. After three weeks only 5,000 qualified proletarians chose to join the Hungarian Red Army.[46]

After these economic, welfare, and military debacles, the process of centrally engendered experimentation by fiat came to an end. At the socialists' demands, three Revolutionary Governing Council commissions were founded to rectify the initial mistakes and to introduce some common sense into the decision-making process.[47] With the evident bankruptcy of the leftist extremist innovations, the momentum of the communist drive for control of the Revolutionary Governing Council was reversed by the socialists, and from the third week on it was the socialists whose views prevailed in the field of domestic politics.[48]

The control of the political police by the communist extreme left was a significant exception to the socialist hegemony in internal affairs. The "Hungarian Cheka" was led by Ottó Korvin, who proved himself a good pupil of Jancsik and Münnich, both of whom had learned the art of political crime detection while serving in the Moscow section of the Cheka. According to the recollections of Korvin's deputy, each of the six sections of the 500-man Political Investigation Department (political, hotel, street, counterrevolutionary leaflet,

[46] For a useful collection on the Soviet Republic's military policies see Ervin Liptai (ed.), *A Magyar Vörös Hadsereg,* 1919 [*The Hungarian Red Army*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1957.

[47] The only important area of public policy that remained essentially unaffected by reversals of communist-initiated maximalist measures was the administration of educational, cultural and welfare measures in the commissariat for public education. Socialist and communist intellectuals and their radical bourgeois collaborators (who included every one of Hungary's talented artists, writers, and progressive educators) were invariably in full agreement concerning the implementation of a comprehensive program of social and cultural reforms. See Katalin Petrák and György Milei (eds.), *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Müvelődéspolitikája: Válogatott Rendeletek, Dokumentumok, Cikkek* [*Cultural Policies of the Hungarian Soviet Republic: Selected Decrees, Documents, and Articles*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1959.

[48] The makeup of the three Revolutionary Governing Council committees bears out this contention. Political committee: Garbai (chairman), Kun, Fiedler, Landler, Böhm (three socialist, two communist); military committee: Böhm (chairman), Kun, Szántó, Fiedler, Haubrich (two socialist, three communist); economic committee: Garbai (chairman), Jenő Hamburger, Gyula Lengyel, Mór Erdélyi, Dezső Bokányi, Béla Szántó, Jenő Varga (five socialist, two communist). "Minutes of the Revolutionary Governing Council of April 3 and April 13, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 6, part 1, pp. 115–116, 190.

house search, and economic crime) relied heavily upon reports from workers "who were true to the dictatorship of the proletariat." Korvin's network of informers covered every location where people congregated: sports events, coffee houses, churches, and meeting halls.[49] The institution of early morning preventive arrests, torture chambers in the basement of the parliament building, and the holding of hostages from among suspected counterrevolutionaries were Korvin's contributions to the cause of the Hungarian proletarian revolution.[50]

The political police were also affiliated with the private army of the extreme left. This self-styled terrorist detachment, called "Lenin Boys" (Lenin *fiúk*), was made up of several hundred leather-jacketed sailors, city thugs, and criminals who had escaped from prison in the early days of the Soviet Republic. The gang was led by a certain Cherny, Szamuely's close friend and a former Hungarian Chekist in Moscow. Instead of serving on the front and fighting foreign invaders, the Lenin Boys concentrated their activities on rich capitalists, aristocrats, and former bourgeois politicians whom Cherny had captured and later released in return for considerable sums of money from the victim's family.[51]

At the end of April the socialist members of the Revolutionary Governing Council presented Kun with an ultimatum: either he was to curb the unwholesome practices of the Korvin sleuths and the Lenin Boys or face the wrath of the organized workers and trade unions.[52] Kun had no choice but to accede to several socialist-proposed punitive measures which, in effect, returned control of the

[49] Ferenc Stein, "A Nép Nevében [In the Name of the People]," in Szerémi, *Heroic Times . . .*, pp. 45–47.

[50] It is difficult to determine whether Korvin was a homicidal maniac, as the contemporary anticommunist literature suggests, or an idealistic zealot of moral integrity with a messianic belief in the purity of the revolution. Oszkár Jászi quotes Korvin's farewell message to his brother (József Kelen), written hours before his execution: "If you come back to power, forget what was done to me." After 1945 Mátyás Rákosi's Communist Party chose to suppress Korvin's last words. Oscar Jászi, *Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary,* London: King and Son, Ltd., 1924, p. 121.

[51] Böhm, *In the Crossfire . . .*, p. 378. Böhm also noted that Korvin "was bitterly opposed to Cherny's group." *Ibid.*, p. 379. See also Albert Váry, *A Vörös Uralom Áldozatai Magyarországon* [*Victims of the Red Rule in Hungary*], Budapest: 1923, p. 14ff.

[52] Vilmos Böhm, Commander-in-Chief of the Hungarian Red Army, was particularly incensed after the Lenin Boys broke into his apartment allegedly in search of hidden food supplies. "Minutes of the Revolutionary Governing Council of April 26, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 6, part 1, pp. 327–329.

police to bourgeois-trained detectives who had first been dismissed by Korvin. Also, the socialist József Haubrich was named to supervise all police activities in Budapest, including those of the secret police and the Budapest Red Guard, which had been captained by Jancsik and Münnich. To complete the process of "decommunization" of the "punitive arms of the proletarian state," Jancsik, Münnich, Szamuely, Rákosi, and many of the Lenin Boys were sent out to the front to serve as political commissars in the Red Army.[53]

The Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

The second level of communist struggle for power in Soviet Hungary took place in the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. This body was created after the elections for local soviets on April 7, 1919. According to the Temporary Constitution of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, only those who "derived their income from socially useful labor" could vote.[54] The official interpretation of this stipulation explicitly defined the limitations of proletarian democracy in Hungary: "Only those soviets and directoria will receive even temporary recognition which were elected by the majority of the revolutionary proletariat."[55] The eligible urban proletariat and landless peasantry who had fought long and hard for the franchise, however, failed to justify the honor bestowed upon them. Although voting was compulsory, in the cities only 30 per cent of the eligible voters cast their ballots for the single-party ticket; in villages about 15 to 20 per cent of those qualified—and very often, unqualified—voters showed up at the ballot box.[56]

In Budapest arrangements for the elections were handled by a committee of nine socialists and one communist,[57] but an analysis of 500 candidates[58] for membership in the Budapest city district coun-

[53]For the remainder of the Hungarian Soviet Republic Rákosi and Szamuely were never given a chance to occupy positions of influence in Budapest. See also Béla Szántó, "Vengerskaia Krasnaia Armiia [The Hungarian Red Army]," *Proletarskaia Revolutsiia*, no. 5 (88), May, 1929, pp. 95–126.

[54]*Tanácsköztársaság*, April 3, 1919.

[55]"Jurisdiction of Rural Councils of Deputies of Workers', Soldiers' and of the Village Poor," *Vörös Ujság*, April 1, 1919.

[56]Hajdú, *Local Soviets . . .*, p. 172.

[57]*Ibid.*, p. 191.

[58]The "committee of 500" also included 100 women. Mária Gárdos, an old socialist journalist and the only woman member of the *Vörös Ujság* editorial board, wistfully remarked in her reminiscences on the April election results: "We hoped the *quota* [of women] would be raised next time" [italics supplied]. Mariska Gárdos, *Kukoricán Térdepelve* [*Punished for Misbehavior*], Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1964, p. 44.

cils whose names were listed in *Vörös Ujság,* April 7, 1919, indicates that the communists were in only a five-to-one minority.

The city's ten district councils elected sixty-four deputies (forty-six socialists, eighteen communists) to the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies which, after the inclusion of sixteen members of the Revolutionary Governing Council (ten socialists, six communists), constituted an eighty-man executive committee, the supreme policy-making organ of the Budapest proletariat.[59] The "Committee of Eighty" was headed by a presidium of five, consisting of four socialists and the communist István Bierman.[60] This body, like its predecessor, the Budapest Workers' Council, was a proletarian quasi-parliament of Budapest and wielded powers often surpassing those of the Revolutionary Governing Council. It seemed that the communists had lost the battle even before it had started. This failure to obtain a majority in the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies was particularly painful, since it made impossible from the outset the successful utilization of the party's tested dual-power strategy toward the socialists. Available transcripts on the proceedings of this purely proletarian body show that every communist proposal—unless consented to by Jakab Weltner, the head of the Committee of Eighty—was invariably defeated by the solid socialist majority.[61]

The most dramatic demonstration of the council's superior position in the governmental structure was actuated by the military crisis of May 2, which had originated with Kun's refusal to accept a conciliatory Allied memorandum requesting the new Hungarian government's recognition of the demarcation lines as defined by the armistice agreement between Hungary and the Entente in November, 1918.[62] Károlyi, then living in self-imposed exile in one of the Budapest suburbs, later remarked bitterly:[63]

59 "Roster of the Committee of Eighty," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . . ,* vol. 6, part 1, pp. 222–223.

60 Hajdú, *Local Soviets . . . ,* p. 194. The word "soviet" denoting this body was first officially used in the April 13 issue of *Vörös Ujság. Népszava,* however, preferred the term "council" when referring to this body.

61 "Proceedings of the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of April 11, 18, May 2, 17, 31," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . . ,* vol. 6, part 1, pp. 184, 260, 390–404, 503–505, 599–602.

62 General Christian Smuts was dispatched by the Allies to negotiate with the Hungarian soviet government. For the text of his proposals and Kun's counterproposals see *Vörös Ujság,* April 7, 1919.

63 Michael Károlyi, *Memoirs: Faith Without Illusion,* New York: Dutton, 1957, pp. 158–159.

So what my Government had not been able to obtain in five months was granted the Communists after a week, proving that the idea of standing up to the West was not such a bad one. . . . These amazingly favorable conditions [offered by Smuts] should have been accepted without delay, but were rejected by Béla Kun, who argued that they would mean a second treaty of Brest-Litovsk. . . . and were unacceptable to a weak Hungary still dominated by the chauvinist element.

In the wake of the unsuccessful Smuts mission the Rumanian troops launched an offensive on April 17. The volunteer Red Army collapsed under the blows of the numerically superior, better disciplined and better armed Rumanian forces, and by the end of April the enemy was only sixty miles from Budapest. Although Haubrich and the Budapest Red Guard succeeded in detaining most of the fleeing demoralized Red Army units before they could reach the city, it seemed that the days of the Soviet Republic were numbered.

During the April 26 session of the Revolutionary Governing Council Kun was forced to admit his mistake in refusing to negotiate seriously with the Entente. Unable to suggest any device that might save the Republic, he offered his resignation. He also appeared to be amenable to socialist suggestions to form a caretaker trade-union government preparatory to surrendering to the Allies.[64] The supreme irony of the situation was that it was Landler and Kunfi who rescued the dejected Kun by urging the Council to defer a final decision on surrender to the next session of the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The Revolutionary Governing Council held another meeting prior to that of the Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, at which time Kun offered to go along with the majority decision on recommending surrender or resistance to the workers of Budapest. After a protracted debate the communists decided, with socialist help, to defend the city.[65]

Kun, Vilmos Böhm, and József Haubrich were dispatched to argue the government's case before the enlarged session of the 500-member Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. From the tone of their pleas and the answering speeches of the deputies, there was never a doubt where the ultimate source of authority lay. Had it not been for Böhm and Haubrich and some last-minute en-

[64] "Minutes of the Revolutionary Governing Council of April 26, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . . ,* vol. 6, part 1, pp. 327–328.

[65] "Minutes of the Revolutionary Governing Council of May 2, Part Two: Evening Session," in *ibid.,* pp. 387–389.

couraging reports from the front, the veteran socialist workers' and soldiers' deputies would willingly have put an end to the ambiguous experiments of the past six weeks and surrendered to the Entente.[66] Several of them made it clear that in their opinion the workers of Hungary had been tricked into a premature proletarian republic by irresponsible communist promises of Russian aid and help from the workers of Western Europe. The communists were severely chastized for the activities of the Lenin Boys and for the lack of adequate protection afforded to the families of Red Army men, who were at the mercy of the new government bureaucracy.[67]

At the end, when the votes were taken, it appeared that the representatives of the Budapest workers were willing to give another lease on life to the faltering government by calling for the immediate establishment of workers' battalions for the defense of Budapest.[68] Within ten days the socialist-controlled Budapest trade unions and the syndicalist factory stewards recruited, clothed, and equipped an army of 50,000 men. This insurgent force not only stopped the Rumanian advance, but reoccupied every major city on the Hungarian plains and by early June was ready to enter Slovakia. These events had made it quite apparent, however, that the Revolutionary Governing Council and the communists within it, in effect, served at the pleasure of the "second pillar of the Hungarian proletarian dual-power." They also underlined the superficial and precarious nature of the communist influence among the organized workers of Hungary: throughout these months the proletariat had remained loyal to

[66] The waverers were also encouraged by resident members of Entente missions and Western journalists who offered to serve as go-betweens for the moderate socialists. Cf. Ellis A. Bartlett, *The Tragedy of Central Europe,* London: Thornton Butterworth, Ltd., 1923; Harry Bandholz, *An Undiplomatic Diary by the American Member of the Inter-allied Military Mission to Hungary,* 1919–1920, New York: Columbia University Press, 1933; and Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *A Párizsi Béke Konferencia és Magyarország,* 1918–1919 [*The Paris Peace Conference and Hungary*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1965, chap. 4.

[67] This criticism should have been addressed to the socialists as well, because nepotism was generally practiced in the government bureaucracy. For example, the People's Commissariat for Social Production was taken over by a dining society of technocrat engineers. The foreign propaganda department of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs under Ilona Duczynszka was said to have been manned by seventy-six members of three large clans of Jewish intellectuals. Relatives of Kunfi, Böhm, Rabinovits, Pogány, and Zoltán Rónai were also given high government positions.

[68] "Proceedings of the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies of May 2, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 6, part 1, pp. 390–405.

their trusted leaders and unions but showed indifference and sometimes contempt for the hopelessly outnumbered communists.

The Hungarian Socialist Party

The third level of the communist-socialist encounter took place in the merged party, with the struggle for power focused on three issues: equitable communist representation in the hierarchy of the united party; arguments concerning the purely proletarian character of the party, purges, and the separation of the party from the trade unions; and Béla Kun's theses on the modification of the old party program. Problems of ideology had never been considered of primary importance among the wielders of power in the Soviet Republic. Kun, Landler, Kunfi, Böhm, and the heads of economic commissariats were much too preoccupied with day-to-day decisions to take time for "idle tongue-wagging," which all (with the occasional exception of Kun) considered "unrevolutionary" when the enemy was lurking before the city's gates. For this reason it fell to the communist extreme left—whose members possessed little of the technical, economic, administrative, or military expertise required to occupy key positions in the state apparatus—to fight for communist interests and to uphold communist principles in the party.

Aside from scattered local resistance by a few communist cells, the technicalities of the communist-socialist merger were accomplished with speed and resolution. Communist factions in factories, workshops, and trade unions were melted into the established socialist locals and trade-union conferences. By virtue of seniority, the incumbent leadership retained its position, and the situation returned to what it had been in November, 1918.

Three communist city-district factions in Budapest were exceptions to this tranquil picture of class harmony. In the Second, Fourth, and Seventh districts the memory of the December-January events (when communists had gained control by imported bribed voters, many of whom carried forged Hungarian Social Democratic Party membership cards) made reconciliation between the warring factions impossible.[69] In early April, when the first opportunity presented itself in the form of elections for district workers' councils, the unredeemed communists tried to gain control of these administrative bodies. Probably at Kun's prodding, the socialist-communist nominating committee decided to prevent renewed factional struggles in

[69] Dezső Szilágyi, "Harcban a Proletárhatalomért [Fighting for the Rule of the Proletariat]," in Szerémi, *Heroic Times . . .*, pp. 55–62.

the party committees of these three districts and granted rather liberal quotas for the communist insurgents.[70] Communists thus transferred out of the district party organizations to the district councils, though they represented a vociferous and often destructive minority in the councils, were effectively cut off from participation in party activities. In fact, the purge was so thorough in the Seventh district that the party organization was still without a secretary at the end of April. The socialists solved the problem in an original, though profoundly anti-Leninist, manner. On May 1 this item appeared in the "Organization News" column of *Népszava:* "Budapest City District VII opens competition for the position of Temporary Secretary of the party organization. Conditions of employment at least five years of trade-union membership and proof of previous political activity. Salary sixty crowns per day or eighteen hundred crowns per month."[71]

In the absence of a central committee (for which the Revolutionary Governing Council substituted when its pressing administrative chores permitted), the central party secretariat was entrusted with the day-to-day conduct of party affairs. The secretariat was composed of seven departments: political affairs, nationalities, agitation and education, greater Budapest area, rural work, working youth affairs, and the women's department.[72] Of the eleven secretaries in charge of the seven departments, there were two communists: Hirossik, in charge of nationalities, and Rabinovits, sharing responsibility with a socialist in the agitation-education department.[73] The communists were not only outnumbered in the secretariat, but, by virtue of their functions were to a large extent forced to operate outside the realm of party affairs. Hirossik, for example, was in charge of the

[70] For names of 500 candidates for city district workers' councils see *Vörös Ujság,* April 12, 1919.

[71] According to *Népszava,* May 8, 1919, a Mór Heller had been the winner of the competition and was elected to the post of temporary secretary.

[72] *Vörös Ujság,* April 15, 1919.

[73] Rabinovits' socialist colleague Emil Horthy (no relation to Admiral Horthy), after twelve years as an exile in the Soviet Union, wrote a letter to the editor of *Proletarskaia Revolutsiia* insisting that he had also been a communist, and not a socialist as V. Miroshevski had implied in "K Kharakteristike Sotsial'noi Prirody Vengerskoi Sovetskoi Respubliki [On the Social Characteristics of the Soviet Republic]," *Proletarskaia Revolutsiia,* no. 4 (99), 1930, p. 66. This indignant rejoinder (*Proletarskaia Revolutsiia,* no. 1, 1931, p. 198) was apparently seconded by the entire Hungarian exile community in Moscow, whose revolutionary credentials were jeopardized by Miroshevski's caustic remarks on the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Their counterattack climaxed with the publication of Pavel [Pál] Hajdú, *Kak Borolas' i Pala Sovetskaia Vengriia* [*How Soviet Hungary Fought and Fell*], Moscow: OGIZ, 1931.

originally communist-sponsored Rumanian, South Slav, Czech, Slovak, Russian (from socialist prisoners of war in Hungary), Polish, German (Volksdeutsch), and Italian communist nationality factions. Except for issuing occasional pro-Hungarian Soviet Republic manifestoes, these groups were of little use to the Hungarian Socialist Party. Later, when the Entente attack began, most of the foreigners were drafted into the Hungarian Red Army's "internationalist battalions," only to fade away when the fortunes of war deserted the Soviet Republic.[74]

Rabinovits, whose task it was to revitalize the limping agitprop apparatus, found himself greatly handicapped by the shortage of experienced personnel who could command respect in socialist-dominated local and regional party conferences. Since the best communist agitators were tapped for service in the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and in the Red Army, Rabinovits was obliged to make do with anyone who was enthusiastic enough to carry on field work for the party. His selection of agitators turned out to be most unfortunate and helped to discredit the united party, particularly in provincial cities and towns. During the June party congress, for example, the delegate from the Székesfehérvár organization complained that the party secretariat had sent sixty orthodox Jewish rabbinical students to his conservative, strongly anti-Semitic, Catholic city to convert people to the cause of socialism.[75] Although these young zealots were later recalled and presumably transferred elsewhere, the damage had been done and the responsibility lay with Rabinovits.[76]

Communist agitation and propaganda efforts were also considerably handicapped by the Department of State Propaganda for Socialism, People's Commissariat of Public Education.[77] This department, headed by the socialist Sándor Szabados, was given sole author-

[74] Rezső Szántó, "A Magyar Vöröshadsereg Nemzetközi Alakulatairól [Internationalist Units of the Hungarian Red Army]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* vol. 4, no. 2, 1959, pp. 221–227; Tibor Hetés, *A 80. Nemzetközi Dandár* [*The Eightieth International Battalion*], Budapest: Zrinyi, 1963; Mózes Gábor, "A Nemzetközi Ezredek Szervezése a Tanácsköztársaság Idején [Organizing the International Divisions during the Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Társadalmi Szemle,* no. 3, 1959; and László Kővágó, "Délszlávok a Magyar Tanácsköztársaságért [South Slavs for the Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* nos. 3–4, 1959.

[75] *Népszava,* June 14, 1919.

[76] For Rabinovits' version of the Székesfehérvár fiasco see *Vörös Ujság,* June 14, 1919.

[77] As a result of an early tactical blunder, the communists consented to the transferral of all written propaganda work from the Central Party Secretariat to Zsigmond Kunfi's Commissariat of Public Education.

ity to issue all written propaganda material in Hungary. As in the party secretariat, the communists were outnumbered six to one. Béla Fogarassi, the only communist section head, and a staff of six tended the affairs of the still unestablished workers' universities, while his six socialist colleagues, with the help of 358 staff members, were busy writing scientific, popular, military, rural, and youth propaganda pamphlets, leaflets, and posters.[78]

The Department of State Propaganda for Socialism was also entrusted with the preparation of syllabi used by students in agitator schools and propagandists in the field. From a content analysis of approximately fifty propaganda pamphlets and several posters, it is apparent that very few Bolshevik ideas managed to gain acceptance by the department. Pamphlets such as "Can a Christian Farmer Be a Communist?" "Are We Going to Communize Zsófi [Sophie]," were far more concerned with alleviating the peasants' fear and apprehensions about the new regime than with upholding "Leninist standards" of the worker-peasant alliance. A similarly compromising tone was adopted in pamphlets dealing with the role of the party under conditions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this respect the only apparent socialist concession was the publication of Lenin's eight pamphlets containing short speeches and the "State and Revolution." Owing to a mixture of pedantic vocabulary and inadequate annotation, it is unlikely that many average workingmen or party activists could read Lenin's words with profit.

It appears that the communist drive for control of the united party was doomed to failure from the very beginning. The dichotomy between the power presumed to be wielded by the considerable communist contingent at the summit of the party structure and the actual extent of communist control exercised over the agitation, propaganda, educational, and organizational aspects of the apparatus was a most conclusive indication of their inferior position in the Hungarian Socialist Party.

At the same time the communists were trying to build up pockets of resistance against the socialists' organizational encroachment in

[78] The department produced an astounding number of 334 pamphlets in 23,710,000 copies and 84 posters in 465,000 copies over a period of four months. Gratz, *Bolshevism in Hungary*, pp. 156–168. In addition, the department prepared and published 680 leaflets (average number of copies per item 500–50,000). For a statistical analysis of the subject distribution of these see Appendix I. Cf. *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Röplapjai* [*Leaflets of the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: A Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár és az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Közös Kiadványa, 1959.

the united party, the communist militants (Révai, Rabinovits, and János Hirossik) began a campaign designed to cleanse the swollen ranks of the party of nonproletarian elements and liberate it from the stranglehold of the trade-union bureaucracy.[79] The dialogue between the communists and Jakab Weltner, Sándor Vince (head of the Political Department, Central Party Secretariat), and several moderate socialists was carried on in the united party's two official newspapers, *Népszava* and *Vörös Ujság*.[80] József Révai's article "For Pure Proletarian Politics!" was the first, and in many respects the most revealing, communist attack on the socialist mass-party concept, which threatened to weaken and eventually destroy the dictatorship of the proletariat in Hungary. The shrillness of Révai's arguments was symptomatic of the leftist-communist frame of mind and testified to a deep desperation over Kun's guileless sellout on the altar of socialist unity:[81]

> Of late we have been receiving reports of bishops . . . [who] exhorted their priests to extend helping hands to the proletariat . . . and join the building of the "new order." . . . Petty-bourgeois elements, middle-class intellectuals, lawyers, factory managers, and priests—all ask for their "share" of work.
>
> The revolutionary proletariat wants no part of such help. We protest the soiling of pure proletarian politics of the Hungarian Socialist Party by masses of petty bourgeois fellow travelers! . . .
>
> The trade unions are filled with frightened capitalists. Bewildered parasitic elements have been forming trade unions. Even priests and stock brokers have formed trade unions . . . yet the party organizations still have not purged themselves of the bourgeoisie. . . .
>
> We are concerned about the sincerity of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat and about the destructive participation of such elements in the constructive work of the people. . . . The bitterness of the last two months and the real possibility of a fratricidal struggle . . . all originated from the fact that petty-bourgeois rubbish could infest a part of the proletarian movement and succeed in dictating some of its policies. . . .

79 Since trade-union membership was virtually the same as party membership, some students of this period have ventured to state that "in the month of May every third adult (about 1.5 million) was a member of the Party." Alfred D. Low, *The Soviet Hungarian Republic* . . . , pp. 40–41n. In the author's opinion, the active socialist membership of 200,000 in early 1918 seems to be a more reliable indicator of the united party's actual maximum mobilizable strength before the June retreat from Slovakia.

80 The former was the morning and the latter the afternoon publication of the Hungarian Socialist Party. The merged party's theoretical journals, *Internationale* and *Szocializmus*, also kept their separate identities.

81 József Révai, "For Pure Proletarian Politics," *Vörös Ujság*, April 4, 1919.

However, we avoided a fratricidal struggle . . . and the leaders of one of the parties had to bow before the logic of the situation. . . . Now there is unity . . . but it was created without the use of coercion and force. . . . Coercion and violence played a most beneficial role in Russia: those who could not have wished for the revolution because of their class background had been thrown off the locomotive of the revolution. . . . These were the middle-class intellectuals, priests, and merchants. . . .

Some may argue that in Russia Lenin was forced to make compromises to the intelligentsia . . . however, it was not Lenin but the intellectuals who sued for peace. . . . The revolution is merciless and cannot sacrifice its own interests in deference to individual interests. . . . Classes cannot afford to have philanthropic viewpoints; favors to other classes can be given only at the expense of proletarian interests.

We do not say that the bourgeoisie should be starved to death *en masse,* for they will be given an opportunity to take part in productive labor—sometime in the future . . . but today they tolerate the dictatorship of the proletariat with gritting teeth and pray for the resurrection of capitalism. Their ideology is still intact! If they are permitted to participate in the work of the revolution, their actions will be guided by bourgeois class interests. . . .

We hereby lodge our most strenuous protest against this, in the name of the revolution . . . for the sake of the revolution, we must be consistent! We must be cruel!

After this principled contribution to the cause of revolutionary purity it was Rabinovits' turn to argue in behalf of the communist left. From the conciliatory tone of his article, it can be surmised that he attempted to soften the impact of some of Révai's reckless statements. While reiterating the case for an exclusively proletarian party, he made this contrast between the party and the government:[82]

The party's work has only begun. . . . Its main task is to educate the masses in the spirit of class consciousness. The state and the school can provide the workers with only basic education, but the party teaches class consciousness. The class-conscious proletariat knows of no higher political forum than its party. The state, the Revolutionary Governing Council, though it may be an exponent of party views, may be compelled, for reasons of domestic or foreign policy, to pursue a tactical line—and may even shift toward the right. The workers' party never shifts (left or right); it must always remain on and adhere to the path of class struggle.

It is possible that this lefthanded attack on the Revolutionary Governing Council was addressed not only to the socialists, but to Kun and his fellow commissars as well, who, apparently for reasons of

[82] József Rabinovits, "Party Unity—Party Politics," *Vörös Ujság,* April 16, 1919.

expediency, had failed to stand up and identify themselves with the communist left in general and with Révai's views in particular.

The most balanced presentation of communist views came from János Hirossik, a former member of the central committee, and one of the two communists in the united party's secretariat. He correctly pointed out the clearly nonproletarian character of many recently established trade unions and free associations whose members, according to the old Hungarian Social Democratic Party practice, automatically belonged to the united workers' party.[83]

> Let us not be sentimental traditionalists. Let us open our eyes. . . . We must not deceive ourselves by believing that those who yesterday had supported bourgeois parties . . . today become resolute socialists . . . and revolutionaries who know that dictatorship is a historic necessity for which they must fight and, if needed, give their lives. . . . These cannot be members of our revolutionary party. They must be swept out of the party. The only way to accomplish this . . . is through the *separation of the trade unions from the party*. . . .

The socialist reaction to the communist attack was twofold. First, the trade unions took the communist critics at their word by resolving that only those who had belonged to one of the trade unions before Nov. 1, 1918, were eligible to hold elected position in the workers' movement (which by implication included the party). This move excluded not only bourgeois elements, but most of the communist left, including Révai, József Lengyel, and László Boros of the *Vörös Ujság* staff. Second, Jakab Weltner, the editor of *Népszava,* took it upon himself to refute Révai's charges, taking strong exception to criticism from "arm-chair socialists who six months ago did not know what the workers' movement was all about."[84] Weltner maintained that extremist views tended to alienate many small peasants and white-collar workers who strongly sympathized with the social and economic goals of the Soviet Republic.[85] He also pointed out the contradiction inherent in the communists' insistence on the necessity of controlled political participation[86] of the masses through

[83] János Hirossik, "For Pure Proletarian Politics," *Vörös Ujság,* April 26, 1919.

[84] Jakab Weltner, "The Trade Union Bureaucracy," *Népszava,* May 18, 1919.

[85] "Bourgeois and Proletar," *Népszava,* May 15, 1919.

[86] "One Million Organized Workers," *Népszava,* May 24, 1919. The communists had argued that only trade-union members and their families should receive food-rationing coupons. As a result, many nonproletarian elements were forced to join one of the several party-affiliated trade unions and free associations. Cf. Jakab Weltner, "Speech at the Trade Union Debate in May, 1919," *Forradalom, Bolsevizmus, Emigráció* [*Revolution, Bolshevism, Emigration*], Budapest: Weltner, 1929, p. 211.

the organizational device of trade unions and their protest against the mass influx of people into these very devices.

> The workers of Hungary can thank only the trade unions for what they have become today. There might be a need for the trade unions as fighting organizations. We have not yet destroyed capitalism, we have only won a major battle . . . therefore, we must be prepared for a new capitalist offensive. If capitalism somehow would temporarily defeat us (we *must think* of *every* eventuality, including *this*), then could there be any other organization but the trade unions to repel the attack and win still another battle? Is there any other organization that so often and so magnificently has withstood every trial?

During the month of May—taking advantage of the improved military situation at the front—Béla Kun delivered five lectures on his proposals for the modification of the party program to a select audience of party and trade-union activists. The avowed purpose of these talks was to create a consensus within the party on the most basic issues of proletarian Hungary. According to Kun these were the completion of the unfinished merger of the two parties, which "thus far has resulted in no party at all"; the separation of the political (party), administrative (workers' councils), and the economic (trade unions) arms of the proletarian society; and the updating of the socialist program of 1903, "which was but a servile translation of the [German Social Democratic Party] Erfurt Program [of 1891], including even the printing errors in the original."[87] Kun took great pains to disassociate himself from "the understandable impatience of our younger comrades with the progress of the revolution." He reminded the audience that not even the Russian Bolsheviks had been free of factional disagreements on matters of centralization, the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty, and methods of controlling production. "It was these three issues . . . around which the so-called left and right Bolsheviks waged ideological struggles, yet party unity—as always in the Russian Bolshevik party—remained firm and unshakeable. Alas . . . we cannot dream of such discipline in our party. . . ."[88]

Discussions that followed Kun's pleas for party unity and sincere adherence to the communist platform all took the same pattern: the communists pressed for a workable compromise and the socialists stolidly refused to give in. While it was not always clear what the socialists stood for, their hostility toward unity at the cost of adopting

[87] Béla Kun, "Lectures on the Modification of the Party Program," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 6, part 1, pp. 460–461, 475–480, 485–494, 516–523, 540–544.

[88] Béla Kun, "Fifth Lecture on the Modification of the Party Program," in *ibid.*, p. 543.

a Bolshevik platform was never in doubt.[89] After two months of struggle for power within the party, Kun was forced to conclude that the Hungarian Socialist Party was still very much a socialist- and trade-union-dominated enterprise. Uncompromising leftist attacks and conciliatory gestures proved equally futile in driving a wedge between the moderate and revolutionary socialist apparatus and gaining control over the commanding heights of power in the united party.

Under these difficult circumstances Kun must have found instructions such as those in Lenin's "Open Letter to the Workers of Hungary" particularly ironic: "Be firm. Should there be wavering or hesitation among the socialists who joined you and the dictatorship of the proletariat only yesterday, or among the petty bourgeoisie, suppress ruthlessly those who still vacillate. Execution by shooting—this is a fitting reward for cowards in war."[90] Lenin, who had been personally briefed by Szamuely on the Hungarian developments,[91] should probably have known that Kun was not even master of his own house, let alone in a position to enforce party unity with bullets. In fact, by the end of May Kun was ready to settle for much less: for a socialist acquiescence to a radicalized party program and for maintaining the status quo (however unfavorable) without further loss of communist prestige and strength.

Conclusions

For the communists the history of the first two and one-half months of the revolution and the party's struggle with the socialists was one of high hopes and keen disappointments, marginal victories and a series of crippling defeats. The first several rounds had been definitely lost to an alliance of socialist politicians and trade-union chiefs.

Hungarian socialists, once freed from the psychological and

[89] "Debate on the Kun Proposals," in *ibid.*, pp. 579–585, 660–664. It was not surprising that Kun canceled the rest of his lectures and the scheduled party conference that was to consider his theses on imperialism and state capitalism for incorporation in the united party's draft program. Béla Szántó, *A Magyarországi Proletáriátus Osztályharca és Diktatúrája* [*The Hungarian Proletariat: Its Dictatorship and Class Struggle*], Vienna: A Kommunisták Németausztriai Pártja, 1920, p. 65.

[90] V. I. Lenin, "Greetings to the Workers of Hungary," *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], 3rd ed., vol. 24, Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1931, p. 316.

[91] On May 21 Szamuely flew in a light plane from Northern Hungary to Vinnitsa. On May 26 he met Lenin in Moscow and reviewed a parade of armed workers' detachments of the Moscow garrison, and on May 31 he returned to Hungary. *Izvestiia,* May 27, 1919.

political handicaps imposed upon them by the logic of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party–bourgeois alliance, found themselves on familiar ground when dealing with their new coalition partners, the communists. Both the socialists and the communists represented working-class interests, both argued their case within the intellectual framework of Marxist political ideology, and both were committed to the practice of proletarian dictatorship and to the ultimate achievement of socialism. But, the socialists, unlike the communists, were bound together by innumerable ties of common experience in the Hungarian workers' movements. They had fought and starved together during strikes and lockouts; they had worked long and hard to build up and maintain their trade unions and illegal party organizations; they had labored unceasingly in establishing social and cultural institutions and programs for the workers of Hungary. Clearly, it was the experienced socialists who knew how much a factory could produce and what absolute minimum living standards were acceptable to the workers, and it was the socialist labor leaders who could establish ten armed trade-union battalions in as many days to defend the proletarian capital of Hungary. Except for pointing to the glowing but distant socialist future in Hungary and to the heroic but dismal present in Russia, the communists could offer little to counterbalance the socialist influence and to capture the allegiance of the Budapest proletariat.

Unlike the Bolsheviks in Russia who remained essentially united in their efforts to rout the left social revolutionaries (and later the Menshevik opposition), the Hungarian communists were divided on such crucial strategic issues as the manner of alliance with the socialists, the use of coercion and terror, and the role of the party versus the workers' councils and trade unions; hence they were unable to present a monolithic facade toward the socialists and make inroads in the ideological and institutional bases of their resistance to communist attempts for undivided possession of power.

Unlike the leaders of the Russian Revolution, who could not and did not expect immediate relief from outside, the Hungarian Soviet Republic was built primarily on assumptions which depended completely on such external factors as Russian aid, world revolution, and capitalist economic crisis. While in Russia the "breathing spell" that Lenin won with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty had enabled the Bolsheviks to consolidate the party's controlling positions in crucial loci of power and prepare for the coming encounters with the Whites and the Allied

expeditionary forces, in Hungary the communists' and socialists' reliance on essentially uncontrollable foreign events created an atmosphere of fatalism, manifested by ideological and governing irresponsibility which resembled a holding rear-guard action rather than a sober commitment to permanently establish a socialist Hungary without outside help, if necessary.

Chapter 8

THE FALL OF THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC

In view of the results of communist strategy and tactics in the first two and one-half months of the proletarian revolution in Hungary, under the prevailing balance of power Béla Kun and his followers could not expect a breakthrough in the socialist wall of resistance. Unless they could prove the exclusive validity of the communist approach to Hungary's internal and external problems, they could not hope to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the forthcoming party congress and the congress of Hungarian soviets to reverse the socialist domination of the party and the government.

To this end, the communists intensified preparations in two directions. First, Béla Szántó, Commander of the Hungarian Red Army, Sixth Division, with the help of Mátyás Rákosi, Ferenc Münnich, and Antonin Janousek (head of the Czechoslovak section of the Hungarian Socialist Party), initiated an offensive against the Czech lines defending the Slovakian frontiers. The purpose of this attack was to reoccupy Eastern Slovakia and to establish a Soviet Republic there. Second, Ernő Bettelheim (Kun's personal representative in Vienna) and Ernő Czóbel (deputy Hungarian envoy to Austria), aided by local communists, were preparing for an armed uprising in Vienna. This coup and the Slovak campaign were scheduled for June 10 to 15, to coincide with the party congress and the congress of soviets.[1]

As far as can be ascertained from the precongress issues of *Vörös Ujság,* the communists had a maximum and, in case of failure, a minimum set of goals to be achieved at the united party's first congress. The optimum target included the passage of a new party program conforming to modifications suggested by Kun, the adoption of

[1]On the origins of the Slovak Soviet Republic see V. Mar'ina, "Revolutsionnoe Dvizheniie v Slovakii v 1918–1919 [Revolutionary Movements in Slovakia]," in A. Ia. Manushevich (ed.), *Oktiabr'skaia Revolutsiia i Zarubezhnye Slavianskie Narody* [*The October Revolution and Slavs Abroad*], Moscow: 1957, pp. 233–270; Peter A. Toma, "The Slovak Soviet Republic of 1919," *The American Slavic and East European Review,* vol. 17, April, 1958, pp. 203–215. On the origins of the Vienna coup see K. Radek, "Istoriia Odnoi Neudavsheisia Buntarskoi Popytki [History of a Stillborn Uprising]," *Kommunisticheski Internatsional,* vol. 2, no. 9, 1920, pp. 1257–1266.

new party statutes providing for a separation of the party and the trade unions, and a purge to cleanse the party of nonproletarian elements. The absolute minimum that the communists were willing to accept included the enforcement of the crucial passages of the Documents of Unity, especially the one defining the name of the party as "communist." Except for a hopeful separation of the trade unions from the party, the statutes were evidently thought of as expendable and of minor importance in comparison to the program. According to László Rudas, if the "substance"—that is, the party's name and program—were communist, the "form" of its internal procedures would sooner or later conform to it.

It was clear from the outset that this time the socialists were not about to repeat their mistake of March 21 by being rushed into indiscriminate acceptance of communist proposals. Weltner made the socialist position on the matter quite explicit on the eve of the party congress:[2]

> Although there is a consensus among us on the necessity for dictatorship ... one of our main differences concerns the freedom of criticism in the party. ... There are many who are ready to abuse the real meaning of dictatorship by gleefully quoting Lenin's letter [the passage demanding death to the waverers]. ... This, however, refers to those who are opposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat. ... We reject any and all attempts of groups composed of a few men to impose their terror on the workers. It is only a few of our mentally deranged "comrades" who shriek for a blood bath. ...

Rudas took up the challenge for the communist side. His editorial reply ignored Weltner's unmistakable references to the communist extreme left and to communist-sponsored attempts to saturate the state apparatus with inexperienced aggressive young zealots. Rudas' remarkable exercise in dialectics is worth quoting extensively, for it demonstrates the real reasons behind the communists' strenuous insistence on their version of the party's name:[3]

> Upon merger the two parties temporarily took the name of "socialist" and left the final decision to the Third International. ... Now it appears that this question has not been settled and will be brought before the party congress.
>
> The gist of the merger was ... that it was not the communists who embraced the social democratic ideology, but the other way around. This is how deep differences dividing us (concerning imperialism as the *last* stage of capi-

[2]Jakab Weltner, "Party Congress," *Népszava,* June 12, 1919.
[3]László Rudas, "Party Congress," *Vörös Ujság,* June 13, 1919.

talism, the *dictatorship* of the proletariat as a revolutionary tool, and the necessity of a proletarian revolution) were resolved in March. The new party accepted and partially realized this . . . but now hesitates on one formality—the name "communist."

The party immediately joined the Third International . . . that acknowledges the existence of only *one* world proletariat; works for *one* world revolution and knows only *the* party, that of the communists who lead this world revolution. . . . The world revolution of the proletariat today is waged within the framework of national entities. . . . This is because of the heritage of the capitalist past . . . the only possible projection of the not yet accomplished but inevitably forthcoming *world unity* is the *unity of the party*. Therefore, he who does not acknowledge the party's unity—let there be no mistake about it, it also means the unified character of every national communist party—also denies the unity of the revolution.

The party's name is the true summary of the facts we have accepted. This is a symbol . . . but a program as well . . . of the proletarian revolution.

The name "communist" becomes doubly meaningful if it is rejected.

Those who originally did not object to our program but now cause difficulties about its name make themselves suspicious and liable for the charge that they had accepted our program with mental reservations under the pressure of the circumstances, but now do not consider the situation final and keep the escape hatch open. . . .

There is no return from the road to revolution . . . "socialism" implies the present . . . "communism," the future. . . . If we accepted the essence, let us accept the form, too.

The First Congress of the Hungarian Socialist Party

The first important meeting of the united party opened on June 12 and began its work on the same day. The delegates included 155 from Budapest, 128 from the provinces, 13 from the former Hungarian Social Democratic Party executive and auditing committee, and 25 from the first and second communist central committees.[4] In the absence of adequate data on the former affiliations of delegates and on the basis of various committee assignments, it can be surmised that of the 327 delegates, 60 to 90 were communist, while the rest were firmly socialist controlled. Thus, as with the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies' elections of early April, the communists were unable to bring the number of their delegates to par with the socialists.

Béla Kun's talk on the party program was the first scheduled

[4] In the following discussion quotations from the proceedings of the party congress are from *Vörös Ujság*, June 13–15 (for communist speeches) and *Népszava*, June 12–19 (for socialist speeches and texts of resolutions).

business on the agenda. He began with a restatement of his earlier remarks on the modification of the party program (see Chapter 7). Regarding Hungary's chances for a rapid transition to socialism, Kun insisted that the introduction of comprehensive socialization measures in industry and central planning would enable Hungary to catch up with the industrially more advanced England in a matter of a few years. He also concluded that the "degree of capital concentration" in Hungary would surpass that of "the American monopolies and trusts" within a short period of time.

Turning to more familiar subjects, Kun proceeded to answer some of the socialist objections that the communists had encountered during the May debates on Kun's proposals: The dictatorship of the proletariat was not a minority dictatorship, but that of an "active minority" in behalf of the entire "by and large passive" working class. The "quality of dictatorship" in the transition period to socialism should be uniformly applied, in spite of the apparent lack of bourgeois opposition to it. The victorious proletariat, though threatened by the survival of the old (capitalist) and by the creation of a new (proletarian) bureaucracy, must not summarily condemn both for the mistakes of the new state administration. The Red Army must be kept as a purely proletarian organization, or there would be the risk of an armed bourgeois counterrevolution. "Concerning our solution to the agrarian question, we have cause for tremendous pride, a pride for which nowhere else in the world has there been a similar cause or occasion." At the end of his presentation, Kun urged the delegates to adopt "the name 'communist' for the party. . . . Aside from the ideological soundness of this name . . . we must not permit the anarchists or those who think of themselves as being more to the left than myself —though I will be glad to give handicap to anyone on leftism—to take the name for themselves in order to exploit its revolutionary attractiveness."[5]

It fell to the socialist Kunfi to initiate debate on the Kun report. Kunfi, who was one of the shrewdest political orators in the Hungarian socialist movement, supported Kun's evaluation of the current capitalist crisis but refused to concur with his conclusions on major aspects of internal politics. He contended that "if we should

[5] Two other proposals were submitted on the party's name. Kunfi's version called for retaining the party's new name adopted on March 21 (Hungarian Socialist Party); Weltner pressed for a compromise solution, "Socialist-Communist Party of Hungary."

continue applying the present methods of dictatorship . . . it will lead to the downfall of the proletariat." Proceeding from the fairly obvious fact of Hungary's precarious condition amidst hostile capitalist countries, he demanded a "provisional program of proletarian dictatorship" employing reasoned measures to prevent the development of a domestic counterrevolution: "To fight simultaneously against foreign imperialism and unnecessarily provoke the forces of counterrevolution at home . . . tends to weaken us, but . . . if it is absolutely unavoidable, we must do it. . . ."

While consenting to a sober use of economic and political coercion in the revolution, Kunfi entered his party's sharp dissent against the use of terror in literature and the arts. He did not name the "cultural tsar" Lukács, but the implication was obvious:[6]

> I maintain that the development of science, literature, and the arts is inconceivable without an atmosphere of freedom. During the ten weeks of proletarian dictatorship we have seen . . . too many frightened men who should be contributing to literature and the arts . . . but do not dare, knowing not what the menacing words of dictatorship really mean. . . . I shall not tolerate any policy which goes against the majority of the organized workers, even if it is practiced under the banner of an active revolutionary minority that wishes to create an oligarchy and is designed to push the waverers aside and does so under comrade Lenin's name . . . nor will the united force of organized workers.

In conclusion he pleaded with the communists "to stop parroting their Russian comrades" and to restrain their propensities for "controlling intraparty dissent with police repression." He dismissed Kun's arguments on the party's name on two grounds: the name "communist" would be another instance of slavish imitation of the Bolshevik example and the Third International—which Kunfi con-

[6] Kunfi's protest against political control of literature and arts was supported by the *MA* group of socialist writers. Lajos Kassák, *Levél Kun Bélához a Művészet Nevében* [*Open Letter to Béla Kun in the Name of the Arts*], Budapest: A *MA* Kiadása, 1919. 100,000 copies of this clandestinely printed twenty-four page pamphlet were distributed to the workers of Budapest. Participants of the first socialist-communist youth congress (June 20–22) were unanimous in defending Kassák and his dissident friends then under attack by an enraged Kun and *Vörös Ujság*. Lajos Kassák, *Kommün* [*The Commune*], vol. 8 of *Egy Ember Élete* [*A Man's Life*] (an autobiography), Budapest: Pantheon, n.d. For heavily edited excerpts from the proceedings of the congress see László Svéd (ed.), *A Vörös Lobogó Alatt. Válogatott Irások a Magyar Kommunista Ifjusági Mozgalom Történetéből,* 1917–1919 [*Under the Red Flag: Selected Writings from the History of Hungarian Communist Youth Movement*], Budapest: Ifjúsági Kiadó, 1955, pp. 308–319.

sistently refused to call "the Communist International"—did not require the party to bear the name "communist" in order to qualify for membership.

Eleven communists and seven socialists took part in the bitter debate that followed the Kun-Kunfi duel. The communist speakers, concentrating their arguments on the party's name and on the proper methods of proletarian dictatorship, maintained that "the party's name must conform to the substance of our present policies and future plans" (Rudas); that "indecision may be exploited by certain left anarchists who might expropriate the name 'communist' for themselves" (Ferenc Rákos, István Bierman, József Rabinovits); that "we cannot let down the Western European communist minorities who derive moral support from our example" (Alpári, Rákosi); that "although the Russian comrades will not be angry if we conduct ourselves in a purely proletarian manner under a name different from communist, they will be very disappointed seeing their advice—which we solicited—ignored" (Rákosi); that since "the West [European majority socialists] did not support us but, on the contrary, abandoned us . . . if we should choose a name, let it be one that came from the East; . . . they merely ask us to adhere to our own platform" (Bokányi).

Communist views on the correct methods of dictatorship were that "it must be strong and merciless until the world revolution spreads elsewhere in Europe" (Rudas); "it must be maintained because the trade unions failed to shoulder their economic and administrative duties" (Bokányi); "we must not be permitted to relax our vigilance to make our institutions more palatable to the entire people . . . this will make for counterrevolution" (Lukács): "the slogan of humanism issued in Budapest . . . is translated by the villages into a battle cry of 'beat the communists' " (Szamuely); "there is no neutral zone in class struggle . . . therefore, any concession will be interpreted as weakness" (Rákosi); "the only way to prevent bloodshed is through a firm exercise of dictatorship, so as to make it unthinkable to rise against the rule of the proletariat . . . otherwise the proletariat will be defeated, and both those who now argue for severity and those who oppose it will hang together" (Bierman).

Weltner succinctly characterized the majority's sentiments on the party's name when he flatly stated: "This cable from the Comin-

tern is based on complete ignorance of our situation in Hungary."[7] Other socialists reminded the congress that the word "communist" was equated by the peasantry with "atheism, Galician Jews, terrorist hangmen, and recklessness in general." In short, the socialists maintained that too many mistakes and leftist excesses had been perpetrated under the flag of communism to permit the adoption of that discredited name. Concerning methods of proletarian dictatorship, the trade-union delegates were unanimous in rejecting "the dictatorship of the left" and the "institution of a system of informers that operates in the traditions of the [Russian] Okhrana."

There can be no doubt that Kun had expected strong socialist objections to his proposals. Not trusting his own group's ability to force the issue, in late May he had sent an SOS telegram to Moscow, asking the Russians to send Bukharin to rescue the communists at the party congresses.[8] However, Bukharin's presence was required in Moscow, and Manuilsky was dispatched in his stead. Manuilsky never arrived in Budapest.[9] By the end of the debate Kun was left with no alternative but to endorse Weltner's compromise solution on the party's name—the Socialist-Communist Party of Hungary. In view of the effort expended on this issue, this was a major defeat for the communists.

[7] In April, 1919, while Rudas was in Moscow, the Comintern prepared a statement on the Hungarian party's name: "The Executive Committee, Comintern, expects your congress to unite your communist party, give it a precisely defined communist program, and decree that your party should bear the name of Communist Party." G. Zinoviev, "Letter of the Executive Committee of the Communist International to the Congress of Hungarian Communists," *The Communist International,* vol. 1, no. 1, May, 1919, pp. 89–90. At the party congress Rudas could not produce the letter because it had been stolen from him by Ukranian bandits on his way back to Hungary. Zinoviev, however, sent a cable to the congress on June 12 that stated, "In view of your first party congress, the Executive Committee of the Communist International resolved to submit the name 'Hungarian United Communist Party' for your consideration." Full text in *Népszava,* June 13, 1919.

[8] The text of the coded cable was as follows: "I urgently request that Bukharin should come to Budapest on June 12. His presence is imperative at the party and soviet congresses that are scheduled for that time." Institute for Party History, Central Committee, Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 6, part 2, June 12–Aug. 1, 1919, Budapest: Kossuth, 1960, p. 274.

[9] According to Kun, Manuilsky's failure to leave for Hungary was due to Rakovsky's scheming against Hungarians in general, and Kun in particular. Other sources indicate that the unavailability of airplanes capable of a nonstop Kiev-Northern Hungary flight is the reason for the failure of the Manuilsky mission.

One of the ironies of the communist-socialist debate was that although the socialists rejected Kun's proposal on the name of the party, the congress adopted an essentially communist program with no debate at all. It appears that they were far more concerned with the party's popular image and the inopportune connotations of the term "communist" than with its program—which few delegates pretended to understand.

Although there was no debate about the program itself, the pragmatic trade-union stalwarts and minor party officials, who held deepseated sentiments of nationalism, anti-intellectualism, and anti-Semitism, had little sympathy with the young Jewish intellectuals who spoke in Kun's behalf, and particularly with ideas they identified as imported or reflective of Bolshevik methods. Socialist hostility toward Bolshevik organizational methods was particularly apparent during the debate on the new party's statutes. The socialist Károly Farkas reported on this point of the agenda:

> Those comrades who contend that the party must be purged . . . of non-proletarian elements and say that we should institute a probationary period [for candidate members] . . . either do not know anything about the Hungarian workers' movement or simply want to imitate Russia in this respect. In our opinion there is no need to invent something with which to keep people away from the party.

Farkas also rejected Kun's arguments for a separation of the party from the trade unions and called instead for a party which was to be closely controlled by the trade unions in order to prevent the development "of a new class of politicians" in the society. City and county conferences of trade-union stewards to be endowed with veto power over the actions of party organizations at the corresponding level were proposed. The statutes also disallowed the formation of politically oriented youth groups and separate women's groups. Finally, Farkas defined the term "proletar" as "anyone who works for wages or salary." The stunned communists, few of whom cared to take part in the one-sided debate (there were only five communists out of the thirty speakers on this issue), apparently gave up the fight and waited for the socialist steamroller to take its course.

The communists' tribulations were not yet over. Many socialists who did not feel competent to contribute to esoteric arguments on the program were on familiar ground when it came to arguing matters of organization. The following typical comment was illustrative of

both the tone and the temper of contributions from such rank-and-file delegates:[10]

> You can say many things about the old Hungarian Social Democratic Party, but not that it allowed a herd of parvenues to infest its leadership. . . . We always booted out those who tried to use the party for individual gains. . . . Just as we have never permitted young punks to dictate party policies to us, we shall not allow a gang of young, decadent, psychologically disturbed degenerates to write our party literature or carry out party agitation.

Having thus "disposed" of the Lenin Boys, *Vörös Ujság,* and Rabinovits' agitator team, the delegates addressed themselves to the rural and nationality deputies. In the best antipeasant and "Hungary first" traditions of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, the outnumbered emissaries of the village poor and the Schwabian, Slovak, and Ruthenian representatives were invariably shouted down when they pleaded for more equitable representation in the party organization and for the recognition of nationality groups as separate entities. Indeed, this part of the proceedings could well have taken place in 1905 or 1906, when the socialists first denied the right of nationalities to form separate socialist organizations. The thin veneer of internationalism had worn off in direct proportion to the fading hopes for a world revolution and external assistance from a fraternal Czech or Rumanian soviet republic. At the insistence of the more enlightened elements within the socialist ranks, a final decision was deferred on the matter of nationalities, and this part of the statutes was sent back for redrafting to the party secretariat.

The election of a party executive was the last item on the agenda. In the absence of any reference to this subject in the communist memoir literature, it is difficult to say whether Béla Kun expected the socialists to be content with their victory on the program and the statutes. In any event, when the election results were communicated to the united party's leaders, it appeared that as the result of a massive anticommunist write-in campaign, with the exception of Kun, the communists failed to receive enough votes to qualify them as members of the party executive. This was more than the communists were prepared to accept. They announced that they would abandon the party unless the election results were voided and a united slate nominated on the basis of parity. Whether it was the traditional propensity

[10] *Népszava,* June 15, 1919. For understandable reasons, this item was not carried in *Vörös Ujság.*

for working-class unity or the socialists' realization that communist cooperation was imperative for the continued existence of the Soviet Republic, the originally proposed slate was restored and elected by acclamation by a most reluctant party congress.[11]

If the resolution of the May crisis had not been sufficient proof of communist weaknesses, the circumstances and the outcome of the party congress were forceful reminders for Kun, and particularly for the extreme left, that their presence in the party establishment was incumbent upon the good will of the organized workers of Hungary.

While anti-intellectualism and a strong undercurrent of anti-Semitism on the part of most socialist delegates were potent factors at the congress, there was at least one other issue that was to contribute to the communist defeat. Kun's only remaining bargaining asset in the party was his presumed ability to "export revolutions abroad" to relieve Hungary of Entente pressure. An armed communist insurrection had been scheduled to take place in Vienna, timed to coincide with the party congress. On June 9, three days before the congress, the Hungarian envoy to Vienna cabled the government expressing grave doubts concerning the success of the planned coup,[12] and on the very eve of the uprising the hapless Putsch-makers were arrested by socialist police in Vienna and subsequently expelled from Austria. Since the contents of the cable had been "leaked" to the delegates by a socialist in Kun's foreign commissariat, Kun's stature as a dynamic promoter of world revolution was considerably damaged.

On the heels of the Vienna debacle came the news of the reoccupation of Slovakia by the Hungarian Red Army. Kun had hoped to capitalize on the psychological effect of this event both at the party congress and in the country at large, but once again the element of time worked against the communists; the congress adjourned two days prior to the announcement of the victory in Slovakia. Moreover, the communists were not given credit for this feat. The socialists saw to it that not the political commissars (Rákosi and Münnich) but the

[11] Executive committee: Ferenc Bajáki, Dezső Bokányi, Sándor Garbai, Béla Kun, Zsigmond Kunfi, Jenő Landler, György Nyisztor, Ernő Pór, Béla Vágo, László Rudas, Károly Vántus, and Jakab Weltner; auditing committee: József Haubrich, Gábor Horovitz, József Pogány, János Vanczák, and Jenő Werner.

[12] Text of coded message in Institute for Party History, Central Committee, Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 6, part 1, March 21, 1919–June 11, 1919, Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 696.

footsoldiers were recognized as the real heroes of the campaign, and the laurels went to Vilmos Böhm and the trade-union battalions.

In addition to his inability to capture the party from above, Béla Kun proved himself an inept and rather unlucky tactician in failing to enroll the support of Hungary's more than one-half million members of the Association of Agrarian Laborers. Had the communists enlisted the support of the peasants by identifying themselves with the agrarian laborers against the antiagrarian socialists, Kun would have immeasurably enhanced the power position of his followers. However, Kun and his left communist friends considered Lenin's agrarian strategy in Russia, as expressed in the Land Decree of November, 1917, an unnecessary compromise which necessitated the introduction of forced grain requisitioning and the use of terror in the Russian countryside. Anxious not to repeat Lenin's "mistake" in Hungary, Kun clung to an orthodox Marxist agrarian policy.

As a first step a communist speaker (presumably Ernő Pór) had been dispatched to argue the party's case before a national conference of seasonal harvest workers in December, 1918. These representatives of the rural proletariat, however, had unanimously voted down the communist draft resolution demanding the immediate nationalization of the land. A few weeks later, on Jan. 11, 1919, a congress of estate servants and small tenant farmers resolved that the government's land reform should leave the estates intact and let the tenants and servants transform them into producing and marketing (but not state) farms.[13] The communists, few of whom possessed even a rudimentary knowledge of agrarian economics, had taken this resolution and the spontaneous land seizures in Transdanubia a month later as symptoms of the peasantry's collectivist propensity and realization of the advantages of large-scale farming over the slavery of private ownership of dwarf plots. Presumably with the Transdanubian seizures in mind, during one of the first sessions of the Revolutionary Governing Council Kun declared: "Let us carry out the revolution on the agrarian field as well. We should be able to do it better than the Russians. . . ."[14]

According to *Izvestiia* of March 23, 1919, the Russian comrades

[13] Vera Szemere, "A Munkás-Paraszt Szövetség Egyes Kérdései 1919-ben [Problems of the Worker-Peasant Alliance in 1919]," *Parttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 1, 1959, p. 24.

[14] "Minutes of the Revolutionary Governing Council, March 27, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . . ,* vol. 6, part 1, p. 48.

viewed the matter differently: "Undoubtedly one of the first acts of the Hungarian Soviet authorities will be a decree on the land similar to the Russian decree of October 26, 1917. The expropriation of the Hungarian landowners and the distribution of land among the peasants will be echoed like a weatherbell in the ears of Rumania's and especially Transylvania's peasantry." Evidently restating Lenin's cables urging Kun to issue a land decree, on April 1 *Izvestiia* had gone so far as to demand the distribution of land in Hungary.[15]

The Hungarian government "Decree 38" on the socialization of the land was enacted on April 3, 1919.[16] The main provisions called for the immediate socialization of medium and large holdings, including buildings, livestock, and implements. The nationalized properties were to be kept intact and collectively cultivated by the agrarian proletariat. The decree failed to define the maximum allowable acreage exempt from socialization and also left the matter of land inheritance unresolved.[17] On April 9, when the news of the Hungarian land decree reached Moscow, *Izvestiia* had stated tersely: "Thus, it appears that the Hungarian government immediately embarked on the sovietization of agriculture." Glowing commentaries were absent at this time!

In the absence of a material stake in the fortunes of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the village poor, "the party's natural allies in the class struggle in the countryside," had remained virtually unaffected by the united party's feeble propaganda efforts. Clearly, in terms of relative benefits received by the village from the government of the proletariat, it was not the landless laborer who profited from the abolition of land taxes and the highly inflated food prices, but it was the well-to-do peasants who prospered as never before. In fact, since

[15]At the Revolutionary Governing Council session of March 27, Vántus made reference to these inquiries from Russia. *Ibid.*

[16]"Revolutionary Governing Council Decree 38," *Tanácsköztársaság*, April 4, 1919.

[17]On the fortieth anniversary of the communist-socialist agrarian blunder an enterprising Hungarian historian discovered that the Revolutionary Governing Council had issued a "strictly confidential order" amending the decree on the nationalization of the land: "Those possessing surplus labor [are unemployed] and demanding individual expropriation may, as an exception for the sake of continued production and for the maintenance of favorable public opinion in the countryside and if there is no other way, be permitted [to receive up to 5 acres of land] provided that the beneficiary has sufficient [amount of] seed and machinery to work with on the expropriated land." Dezső Nemes (ed.), *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Történelmi Jelentősége és Nemzetközi Hatása* [*The Hungarian Soviet Republic: Its Meaning and International Significance*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1960, p. 22.

the communists had insisted on retaining the former and often vehemently disliked estate managers on the collective farms, the rural proletariat was actually forced to seek protection against the party government by creating an interest group of its own. Like the trade unions, the Association of Agrarian Laborers was primarily concerned not with the ideological purity of the revolution, but with the welfare of its members.[18] Having failed to receive its expected share of land, the organized rural proletariat had pushed for more immediate benefits in terms of exceedingly high daily wages in kind. The result was that the prewar ratio of 201 kilograms of wheat marketed per yoke fell to 60 kilograms, defeating the socialist-communist assumptions concerning the higher yields of nationalized lands,[19] and the organized peasants, who suddenly had changed from "natural allies" into "objective enemies," became the target of high-handed antilabor policies by the bitterly disappointed government.

The proceedings of the congress of agrarian laborers of June 1 and 2 in Budapest demonstrated that the abyss between the unsympathetic government and the peasantry was too deep to be bridged by Rákosi's doctrinaire reasoning counseling a voluntary renunciation of wages in kind.[20] The enraged Nyisztor was consistently voted down during the debates and was forced to close the meeting a half day earlier than originally scheduled and send the recalcitrant peasants back to their villages.[21]

Still smarting from this defeat, and not wishing to be subjected

[18] Thus the village poor, unlike their proletarian counterparts in the cities, with good reason refused to join the Red Army and fight for the Soviet Republic. According to his biographer, Jenő Landler soon realized the fallacy of the government's agrarian policy and "constantly argued with Kun about distributing the land among Red Army veterans." Béla Gadanecz, *A Forradalom Vezérkarában* [*On the General Staff of the Revolution*], (a biography of Jenő Landler), Budapest: Táncsics, 1959, p. 123.

[19] Szemere, "Certain Problems . . ., p. 35.

[20] *Vörös Ujság*, June 2, 1919.

[21] The closing minutes of the peasant congress were illustrative of the workings of the worker-peasant alliance in Hungary in the third month of proletarian dictatorship: *"Chairman:* Now I move to close the meeting. *A voice:* We still have not made any decision about the most important things. I am a peasant (noise) . . . please let me speak for a minute. . . . *Chairman:* You will be ejected from the room if you create any more disturbance (great noise and shouting)." Quoted in Gusztáv Gratz, *A Bolsevizmus Magyarországon* [*Bolshevism in Hungary*], Budapest: Franklin, 1921, p. 172. Nyisztor's abruptness was understandable; this congress coincided with a two-day railroad strike in Transdanubia which the government was unable to suppress and was therefore obliged to grant an across-the-board pay raise to all transportation employees. Cf. Gadanecz, *On the General Staff* . . ., p. 144.

to another round of verbal abuse, the united party's leadership had retaliated against the unreasonable representatives of the rural poor by introducing a dual standard in the nominating process for delegates to the party congress. Every 1,000 organized workers per city or per village were entitled to one delegate at the congress. Since this number was practically unattainable on a village basis, and an aggregate representation by a combination of several villages was disallowed by the party secretariat, the rural proletariat was, in effect, excluded from the party congress. These tactics certainly had not contributed to better relations between the city and the village, although they had helped to eliminate the imponderable agrarian problem from the agenda. However, the communists had, by this "ostrich policy" for which they were as much responsible as the socialists, deprived themselves of the help of such potential rural supporters as former prisoner-of-war activists who had returned to their native villages with agitprop assignments during the previous winter. Consequently they remained without allies in their struggle with the socialists for the control of the party.

It appears, then, that the communist defeat at the party congress lay in Kun's faulty perception of the dynamics of the Bolshevik strategy on class alliances, the extent of socialization, and the agrarian question. Whether it was latent chauvinism, revolutionary zeal to surpass the Bolshevik record, a lack of Marxist sophistication, or possibly all three, the fact remains that a great many of these avoidable tactical errors can be attributed to Kun's failure to realize the essential differences between Russia and Hungary after a victorious proletarian revolution: the Hungarian socialists were incomparably stronger than the Mensheviks, the Hungarian peasant was no different from the Russian peasant in his yearning for land, and Hungary's industrial development and natural resources were inferior rather than superior to those of Russia.

The Congress of Hungarian Soviets

The next scene of the communist-socialist power struggle was enacted during the nine-day national Congress of Soviets, which opened on June 16. The agenda included reports and debates on the economic situation (Varga), finances (Gyula Lengyel), agriculture (Jenő Hamburger), foreign policy (Kun), the military situation (Böhm), food supplies (Mór Erdélyi), and the new constitution, and ended with the election of a 150-member Federal Central Executive

Committee.[22] It was the outcome of the debate on foreign policy that decided the fate of the soviet republic and caused an irreparable split within both the socialist and communist elites.

Béla Kun's report on foreign policy concentrated on the Clemenceau *aide memoire,* which promised the cessation of hostilities by the Entente in exchange for an immediate evacuation of Slovakia by the Hungarian Red Army.[23] Speaking for the majority of the Revolutionary Governing Council, Kun began his presentation with a review of the "crises of the postwar world of imperialism." He introduced a highly optimistic assumption regarding Soviet Hungary's chances for survival surrounded by the Entente:[24]

> We must point out the existence of major conflicts of interests among the states of the Entente which enable us to continue our policies of [international] class struggle. There are deep and grave differences among the various groups of victorious imperialist states. Though they agree on colonizing other countries and driving them into their respective spheres of interest . . . yet because of the inner laws of imperialism, these [victorious] states are compelled to fight [for the colonies] among themselves. . . .
>
> Since Hungary is eminently suited for purposes of colonization and is a likely candidate for membership in one or another [imperialist] sphere of interest, it is certainly a prize that precludes any agreement [as to its control] by the Entente imperialists.

Proceeding from this wishful reasoning, Kun recommended Soviet Hungary's compliance with the Clemenceau note. He considered the success of this tactical retreat a foregone conclusion. Citing the Brest-Litovsk Treaty as being analogous to Hungary's current situation, he predicted that the impending conclusion of the German peace treaty would generate a revolution in Germany, which would in turn enable Hungary to recapture whatever it had lost due to Entente pressure.

Obviously straining for an adequate explanation of his failure to arrange a "Brest-Litovsk Treaty" with General Smuts, who was in Budapest in early April, Kun argued that although Hungary had been

22 *A Tanácsok Országos Gyülésének Naplója* [*Proceedings of the National Congress of Hungarian Soviets*] (stenographic report), Budapest: Athenaum, 1919. For an irreverent and rather entertaining day-by-day account of the doings of the congress, see Morin (pseud.), *Tisztelt Szovjet!* [*Esteemed Soviet!*], Budapest: 1919.

23 Text of the Clemenceau letter and the Hungarian government's reply in *Népszava,* June 19, 1919. See also Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *A Párizsi Béke Konferencia és Magyarország,* 1918–1919 [*The Paris Peace Conference and Hungary*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1965, pp. 153–176.

24 *Proceedings of the National Congress. . . .*

"too weak to negotiate" in April, the same was not true in June, when the German, Austrian, and Czech revolutions were "only days away. . . . The imperialist peace which we are forced to conclude will not last longer than the one at Brest-Litovsk . . . and it will not be Hungary . . . but the proletariat of Czechoslovakia, Jugoslavia, and Rumania who will destroy it for us."[25]

Whether by prearrangement or coincidence, the Kun proposals found their staunchest supporter in Kunfi. He spoke after Pogány and Szamuely had delivered their emotionally charged antipeace monologues, giving the impression that he wished to spare Kun from openly arguing with his own followers. It is possible that with this move he intended to deepen the split between the relatively moderate Kun and the communist extremists. Kunfi's seconding speech included two significant arguments concerning Hungary's role in the world revolution and her relationship to Russia:[26]

> Contrary to views motivated by a curious type of socialist messianism whose advocates argue for the continuation of our armed struggle until we liberate the suppressed world proletariat, I believe our only duty toward the international proletariat and the world revolution . . . is to save and preserve this country for the cause of its soviet republic and the dictatorship of the Hungarian proletariat.
>
> Since it has been the strength and revolutionary spirit of the Hungarian proletariat and not the armed assistance of our Russian proletarian brothers that liberated us and crushed the capitalist order in Hungary, and since Russia —except for its great example—has not given us anything, we do not owe anything to the proletariat of the world except for what Russia has given us and the world proletariat: the maintenance of social revolution right here in Hungary.

This speech placed Kun in an extremely awkward position. To endorse Kunfi's "socialist *raison d'état*" and abandon the Slovaks would certainly set him against Pogány, Szamuely, Landler, Vágó, and the *Vörös Ujság* zealots, but to reject the scheme of "social revolution in two countries" would result in his being voted down by the overwhelmingly socialist delegates to the soviet congress.

[25] *Ibid.*, pp. 111–115. A more plausible reason for Kun's sudden desire to arrange for a "Hungarian Brest-Litovsk" could have been a cable on June 17 from Rudnyánszky (the Hungarian ambassador in Moscow) predicting that "Petrograd's fall" was "only a matter of days." Tibor Hajdú, "Adatok a Tanácsköztársaság és Szovjet-Oroszország Kapcsolatainak Történetéhez [Data on the History of Foreign Relations between Soviet Hungary and Soviet Russia]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 3, 1961, p. 117n.

[26] *Proceedings of the National Congress . . .*, p. 125.

Kun's position was also considerably aggravated by his personal stake in the existence of Slovakia as a soviet republic. When the birth of the Slovak Soviet Republic was announced in Kassa on June 16 few knew that this new revolutionary entity was actually the creation of the Hungarian communist extreme left: hence its loss would damage important communist interests. The Slovak Revolutionary Governing Council was headed by Antonin Janousek, who had been Kun's right-hand man in efforts to revolutionize the partly Slovak-inhabited northern Hungarian mining regions.[27] One of the two People's Commissars of Foreign Affairs was Ernő Pór. He was aided by János Hirossik and Tibor Szamuely as People's Commissars of Commerce and Social Production,[28] and according to Endre Rudnyánszky, (Kun's successor as the president of the Federation of Foreign Groups), three other Slovak members of the cabinet had been associates of Kun in Russia at the Federation of Foreign Groups.[29] It is possible that the socialists at least suspected the magnitude of the communist stake in Slovakia. Rudnyánszky, who was Hungary's official representative in Moscow during the Hungarian Soviet Republic, gave this candid account of his comrades' hopes and aspirations associated with Slovakia:[30]

> The Hungarian proletariat had to contend with precisely the same problem as the Russian proletariat, namely, to convince the workers of all oppressed peoples of the former Hungarian Kingdom that Hungary's proletariat had no intention whatsoever of oppressing them, and that their only means of defending themselves against foreign capitalism lay in forming a federative soviet republic jointly with the Hungarian proletariat. Following these lines, Hungary formed her first Ukraine—Soviet Slovakia. . . .
>
> Like Soviet Russia, which came to the Ukranian Soviet government's assistance with its organizing forces, Hungary delegated out of its own party workers several capable comrades to the newly organized Slovak government.

[27] Like Kun in March, Janousek's first official act was to send a telegram of greetings to Lenin. N. V. Matkovskii (ed.), *Proletarskaia Solidarnost' Trudiashchikhsia v Bor'be za Mir,* 1917–1924: *Dokumenty i Materialy* [*Proletarian Solidarity in the Struggle for Peace: Documents and Materials*], Moscow: 1958, pp. 116–117.

[28] Tibor Hetés (ed.), *A Magyar Vörös Hadsereg,* 1919, *Válogatott Dokumentumok* [*The Hungarian Red Army: Selected Documents*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 378.

[29] A. Rudniansky [Endre Rudnyánszky], "The Slovak Soviet Republic," *The Communist International,* vol. 1, no. 3, July, 1919, p. 416. See also *Pravda,* July 4, 1919.

[30] Rudnyánszky, *Ibid.,* pp. 415–416. See also Mar'ina, "Revolutionary Movements. . . ."

Kun's summing-up speech in the foreign-policy debate was designed to disassociate him from Kunfi's "pacifistic motivation" but not from his conclusion and from Szamuely's plea for continued fighting, which Kun labeled as "leftist defeatism," but not from his motivation of a primary allegiance to the cause of world revolution. This process of mental acrobatics for the sake of party harmony was reflected in Kun's compromise formula:[31]

> Comrades, I say to you that what we need today is a certain amount of proletarian-communist chauvinism that should enable us to create an advance assault basis for the continuation of international proletarian revolution. From this standpoint the foremost interest of the international proletarian revolution lies in the continued existence of the Russian and Hungarian Soviet Republics.

His simultaneous call for retreat and international revolution satisfied neither the socialists nor the communist left. On June 21 the Revolutionary Governing Council, in compliance with Clemenceau's request for a "cessation of hostilities" in northern Hungary and retreat from Slovakia, ordered the Hungarian Red Army to withdraw by June 30 at the latest. The socialists, led by Böhm, Kunfi, and Erdélyi, concluded that the irresolute Kun was being forced to represent the interests of "homicidal terrorists" and that his political ineptness would endanger the breathing spell gained by the retreat from Slovakia. They decided to organize an armed insurrection, drive out the communist extremists, and form a trade-union government.[32]

However, they failed to reckon with the people whom they hoped to deliver from the communists. While the party and soviet congresses were in session a powerful counterrevolutionary trend had been sweeping through Budapest. Antigovernment propaganda was fanned by an improbable alliance of Admiral Horthy's agents (in behalf of the French-supported Szeged White government), frustrated trade-union leaders, angry peasants, the dispossessed middle class, the Catholic clergy, and the proletarian housewives who could not feed their families while their men were fighting for the revo-

[31] *Proceedings of the National Congress . . .*, p. 135.

[32] Vilmos Böhm, *Két Forradalom Tüzében* [*In the Crossfire of Two Revolutions*], Vienna: Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1923, p. 437; and Béla Kirschner, "A Tanácsköztársaság Jobboldali Vezetőinek Tevékenysége a Párt és Tanácskongresszuson [On the Activities of the Hungarian Soviet Republic's Rightist Leaders at the Party and Soviet Congresses]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 2, 1965, pp. 91–115.

lution.[33] The common denominators of popular discontent were anti-dictatorship, anti-atheism, and anti-Semitism; for most of them the dictatorship had brought little more than empty promises and shortlived military victories.

The government's reckless antireligious campaign, headed by the defrocked priest Oszkár Fáber, had caused irrevocable damage during the first three months of the revolution. Churches desecrated by the Lenin Boys, priests insulted and harassed by Red Guardsmen, and the removal and burning of crucifixes by zealous local communists were hardly conducive to good will among the people toward the new government of the proletariat. The new elite also provided a very plausible target for anti-Semitic sentiments. Since most of the communist and some of the socialist leaders were Jewish, as were members of the "Red bureaucracy," political commissars in the army, judges and prosecutors of revolutionary courts, journalists, writers of propaganda pamphlets, and the leaders of communist youth and women's auxiliaries, charges of "Jewish conspiracy" fell on fertile soil among the strongly anti-Semitic Hungarians.

The strongest of the antiregime underground forces were groups of former professional officers, disabled war veterans, and organized workers who had deserted from the Red Army. Apparently they received advance information of the socialist coup planned for June 24 and decided to launch an armed insurrection of their own on the same day. Owing to a last-minute change of heart by Haubrich, the commander of the Budapest garrison, the socialist coup did not materialize, but these other groups of plotters did launch an armed uprising in Budapest on that day. It was suppressed after twenty hours of street fighting. There had been no coordination between the socialist plotters and the heterogenous antigovernment forces; the majority of the population was by then too exhausted by the multitude of rapid and violent political changes of the previous ten months to rally around an anticommunist, anti-Semitic, "Christian-National" platform (or any platform, for that matter) and rid itself of the tyrannical minority that ruled Hungary; and the govern-

[33] Tibor Hajdu, "Az 1919 Junius 24-i Ellenforradalmi Lázadás Történetéhez [On the History of the Counterrevolutionary Mutiny of June 24, 1919]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 2, 1959, pp. 240–272; and Mrs. Sándor Gábor, "Az 1919 Junius 24-i Ellenforradalmi Kisérlet [Counterrevolutionary Attempt of June 24, 1919]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 2, 1962, pp. 67–97.

ment, though rapidly losing control over the deteriorating internal situation, was still strong enough at the end of June to suppress a poorly organized and ill-coordinated uprising.

The psychological impact of this short-lived insurrection, however, was a reliable indicator of the government's complete lack of public support and the superficiality of its control over the proletariat at large. Soon after the first insurgent gunboat began to fire on the Soviet House (a luxury hotel on the Danube, where most communist officials resided), national flags appeared at many windows, the patrons in coffee houses burst into patriotic songs, churches in working-class districts were filled by women praying for the end of the "commune," and in spite of the chairman's prodding to take up arms and fight for the republic, most members of the Budapest Workers' Council, which was then in session, vanished one by one, until only a handful of the 500 city fathers of the proletarian capital were left in the suddenly quiet meeting hall.

The Leftist Phase

The abortive uprising of disillusioned soldiers and organized workers made a profound impression on members of the government. Several socialists, including Kunfi, Böhm, Erdélyi, and Péter Ágoston (Kun's Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs), were convinced that the revolution was in a process of decline from which it could not recover without external military aid and the institution of internal terror. Dismayed by the abuse and threats of physical violence to which they had been subjected by left extremist delegates during the party and soviet congresses, they felt that the revolutionary momentum of the proletariat had spent itself and that their continued presence in the party and the government would only prolong the tenure of its unworthy leaders. Kunfi and Böhm must have realized that the objective and subjective conditions for revolution were about to turn against those who had come to power only a few months ago on the tide of the popular resentment against and ruling impotence of their bourgeois-democratic predecessors.

With the resignation of these disheartened moderates a new Revolutionary Governing Council was formed. It included the communist center, a few additions from the left, and socialists who, having been denounced and disowned by their unions,[34] had no choice

[34]Landler by the Railroad Workers' Union, Bajáki by the Metal Workers' Union, and Garbai from the Construction Workers' Union.

but to support the now communist-controlled government.[35] This polarization of the ruling elite had significant effects on government policies. The disappearance of moderates for the first time permitted the communists to introduce several distinctly leftist—and, one should add, desperate—measures aimed at revitalizing the dejected party and government apparatus and reestablishing control over the apathetic proletariat.[36]

Since the government preferred to believe that the June 24 uprising had been motivated by priest-incited religious fervor and anti-Semitism, the Revolutionary Governing Council decided to head off these trends with its own anti-Semitic measures. Jewish refugees from Poland, many of whom had been engaged in small-scale commercial activities in Budapest during the war, appeared to be the most likely targets at which to redirect the primarily anticommunist working-class anti-Semitism in the city. According to a *Vörös Ujság* report: "The police department organized raids on those who had come from Galicia and are reluctant to leave the city. The first trainload of Galicians has left for Poland. In the future no more raids will be held, but a guaranteed shipment of 2,000 Galicians will be returned in cooperation with the Polish Embassy."[37]

After the "Jewish problem" had thus been "solved" in the capital, the government launched a barter program of "consumer goods for wheat" in the countryside.[38] This move alienated the village poor, who had nothing to barter, left the rich peasant largely indifferent to this suspicious overture, and consequently helped little to relieve the acute food shortages in Budapest.[39]

The third step, which came in the wake of the unsuccessful barter program, provided for the evacuation of the capital by every-

[35] The Socialist-Communist Party of Hungary, as such, completely disappeared after the party congress. Except for a joint session with the Revolutionary Governing Council on August 1, there is no evidence that the party central executive committee held any sessions after the middle of June.

[36] At least this was the impression the Hungarian communists gave to Moscow when briefing the Bolsheviks on the prospects of the Budapest government. According to *Izvestiia,* "The Governing Council has become the steel tower of dictatorship of the proletariat." "White Guard Attack in Budapest," *Izvestiia,* July 2, 1919.

[37] *Vörös Ujság,* June 25, 1919.

[38] Károly Mészáros, "Adalékok a Tanácsköztársaság Pénzügyi Helyzetének Alakulásához, a Város és Falu Közötti Termékcseréhez, Rekviráláshoz [Data on the Financial Conditions of the Soviet Republic, on the Barter of Commodities between City and Village, and on Requisitions]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 3, 1962, pp. 38–61.

[39] Szemere, "Certain Problems . . . ," pp. 40–41.

one not connected with industrial production, national defense, or vital services.[40] Because of a coal shortage and a lack of transportation, the decree could not be executed.[41]

Fourth, the Revolutionary Governing Council, in a major reversal of its dogmatic insistence on a "proletarian class army," which was in the process of disintegration after the retreat from Slovakia, introduced universal military service, including the drafting of former professional officers.[42]

Fifth, in an effort to boost the disastrously plummeting industrial production, the National Economic Council, headed by Varga, reinstituted the recently abolished piece rates and incentive wages in every socialized enterprise.[43] The resourceful Varga also launched a campaign of "socialist work competition" that called for a seven-day work week without overtime pay. Other proposed projects that the government was unable to execute included the deportation of all priests and nuns to Austria, the raiding of bourgeois households for food hoardings, and the arrest of several syndicalists (among them Mosolygó and Mikulik, former members of the communist first central committee) who protested the government's use of force against the work stoppages and slowdowns by starving workers in the factories.[44]

At the same time the communist extreme left reemerged on the political scene for a last-minute attempt to save the revolution for those "who still had an unshakeable faith in the dictatorship of the proletariat." Their first task was to reorganize their ranks, present an ideologically united front toward the Revolutionary Governing Council, and demand the consistent execution of the belated and desperate measures decreed during the frightened and confused days of late June. According to the socialist Lajos Kassák's recollections, the would-be saviors of the revolution were remarkably unprepared to execute their self-appointed mission.[45]

[40] Gyula Lengyel, "A Közellátásról [On the Food Situation]" (speech before the plenary session of the Budapest Central Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on July 3, 1919), *Válogatott Irásai* [*Selected Writings*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1965, pp. 128–144.

[41] "Minutes of the Revolutionary Governing Council, July 4, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents* . . . , vol. 6, part 2, p. 409.

[42] "Revolutionary Governing Council Decree 76," *Tanácsköztársaság,* July 12, 1919.

[43] "Better Productivity—More Pay," *Vörös Ujság,* July 9, 1919.

[44] "Minutes of the Revolutionary Governing Council, June 25, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents* . . . , vol. 6, part 2, p. 342.

[45] Kassák, *The Commune,* p. 128.

> The workers are tired, and the intellectuals who joined Kun before the dictatorship have become confused and enmeshed in their contradictions. They were philosophers, poets, and esthetes who stepped into the healthy storm of revolution, but they could not take the continuous fights, attacks, and retreats, and at the end they sullenly slipped back to the lukewarm bottomless mud of their doctrinaire fixed ideas. Dangers abounded outside, but they gathered . . . in one of their rooms in the Soviet House and the endless, bitter debates began. There was György Lukács, the former Heidelberg philosopher, József Révai, former bank clerk and esthete, . . . Ervin Sinkó, the young Christian Tolstoyan writer, . . . and Elena Andreevna Grabenko, Lukács' Russian wife. There were also some scatterbrained ideologues. Quotations from Hegel, Marx, Kirkegaard, Fichte, Weber, Jean Paul, Hőlderlin, and Novalis were flying in the air!

Again, as in late March and early April, it fell to Szamuely to assume leadership of the forces of the left opposition. From the unusually contradictory memoir literature, it may be surmised that Szamuely's strategy involved two propositions. In terms of ideology, the extremist-controlled *Vörös Ujság* and *Internationale* groups launched a concerted attack on the last vestiges of bourgeois reformism—most often identified with Kunfi—in the party, in the propaganda apparatus, and above all, in the now communist-controlled commissariat for public education.[46] Other demands included an immediate purge of the party and state bureaucracy of "nonproletarian waverers," the restoration of full powers to political commissars in the Red Army, and firmly enforced revolutionary vigilance against the still active socialist trade-union bureaucracy.[47]

Szamuely was a man of action. He preferred to handle the organizational aspects of his campaign himself rather than leave them to his zealous but militarily useless intellectual friends in the Soviet House. His design for the deliverance of class-conscious communists from the half-socialist united party called for the formation of an underground network of tightly organized Bolshevik-type secret cells which—probably with the help of sympathizers within these organizations—would infiltrate and eventually take control of the party secretariat, the trade unions, and the workers' councils. This plan was first conceived after the communist defeat at the party con-

[46] The first test of strength had been in early June when József Lengyel, one of the *Vörös Ujság* extremists, accused Sándor Szabados, head of the department for state propaganda of socialism, of inefficiency and financial laxity. *Vörös Ujság,* June 3, 1919. Investigation followed, but the findings were not made public.

[47] József Révai, "We Crushed the Counterrevolution," "Proletarian or Bourgeois Dictatorship?" *Vörös Ujság,* June 26, "For Proletarian Public Administration!" *Vörös Ujság,* July 8, and "Social Democrat," *Vörös Ujság,* July 15, 1919.

gress.[48] Kun, who supported the project, suggested the launching of a new *Vörös Ujság* to serve as a public rallying point for the revolutionary left.[49]

Along with these clandestine preparations, Szamuely, with the help of Otto Korvin, also undertook to reorganize the Lenin Boys, who had been disbanded in late April. This was, however, more than the socialist members of the Revolutionary Governing Council and the Red Army's general staff (made up of professional officers from the old army) were prepared to tolerate.[50] When Szamuely refused to dismiss his resuscitated private army, the general staff, with Kun's reluctant consent, dispatched a reliable army unit which surrounded the terror detachment's headquarters and disarmed the frustrated Hungarian Chekists at gunpoint.[51]

Like the irresolute socialist plotters in June, Szamuely was outguessed by another similarly motivated group of leftist conspirators. At the June party congress several communist speakers had made oblique references to "anarchist groups that might expropriate the communist name." According to Kassák, an anarchist group had come into being in late March—presumably with Szamuely's consent—as a protest movement against the "soft communist center."[52] This group reorganized in early July and began to plot for an armed uprising aimed at the Budapest bourgeoisie in general and the socialist members of the Revolutionary Governing Council in particular. These efforts were aided and partially financed by two Ukrainian officers who, as Rakovsky's personal representatives, had been recruiting former Russian prisoners of war in Hungary to serve in the Ukrainian Red Army. The anarchist group consisted of 200 to 300

[48]József Révai, "Foreword" to Borbála Szerémi (ed.), *Nagy Idők Tanui Emlékeznek* [*Heroic Times Remembered*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 14.

[49]Szamuely argued for the name *Kommunista* [*Communist*] for the newspaper. The plan could not be implemented in July, however, and the Hungarian Soviet Republic fell on August 2. Cf. Béla Kun, "Foreword" to Tibor Szamuely, *Riadó* [*Alarm*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1957.

[50]Through a conspiratorial error Szamuely's plan became known in early July. Thereupon, *Népszava* declared: "It is out of the question to reactivate the disbanded Lenin Boys who have gravely sinned against proletarian honor; . . . therefore, the proletarian state has no further use for them. . . ." Quoted in Károly Dietz, *Oktobertől Augusztusig* [*From October to August*], Budapest: 1920, p. 157.

[51]Following this debacle, Szamuely spoke before the extreme-left-controlled Budapest Fourth-district Workers' and Soldiers' Council and argued for the formation of a "special independent police detachment to investigate and suppress counterrevolutionary activities." Tibor Szamuely, *Alarm,* p. 208.

[52]Kassák, *The Commune,* p. 129.

workers from the Csepel armament plants and from certain extremist-controlled Budapest city-district workers' councils.[53]

The coup, which was scheduled for July 21 (perhaps to coincide with the Comintern-sponsored international solidarity strike), was uncovered by Kun and Szamuely. Szamuely either had had knowledge of these plans or had abandoned the plotters at the last moment (two days earlier). According to Kassák, the two Ukrainian officers were shot on the spot and later thrown, minus their boots, into the Danube, while the rest of the anarchist group was allowed to escape. The routing of the ill-fated anarchist conspiracy became public knowledge in a matter of hours. Everyone, including the socialist leaders, believed that the affair had been organized by Szamuely and the communist opposition. True or not, as a result of widespread indignation, the extremist left was disowned by the party and disappeared during the last few days of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.[54]

Anarchy and Defeat

In the middle of July the 150-man Federal Central Executive Committee held a two-day conference to discuss, in Kun's words, the "crises of power, economy, and morale."[55] This euphemism (as Kun explained) meant in reality that after four months in power, the

[53]According to the well-informed Kassák, the conspirators held their secret meetings in the vestry of a Franciscan church in a fashionable district in Budapest. *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[54]It appears that ten days later when the passenger list was compiled for the "commissars' special" train, which was granted diplomatic immunity by the Austrian government, Szamuely, Korvin, Lukács, Révai, and several lesser extremists were left to their own devices to flee before the counterrevolution. Mária Gárdos, a moderate socialist and member of the *Vörös Ujság* staff, later recalled: "After I arrived in Vienna something happened that gave me a serious problem. I learned that after the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic several members of the *Vörös Ujság* staff were invited to flee aboard the 'safe conduct' train to Austria. This information was like a slap in the face. How could it happen that I was not made aware of this opportunity to escape, when it was I who for twenty years longer than anyone else on the staff had been fighting the ruling classes and authorities of Hungary. I certainly could not expect mercy in the case of capture. What else could have been the explanation for this 'oversight' but the fact that the Communist Party of Hungary did not need me any more and demoted me to second-class membership." Mariska Gárdos, *Kukoricán Térdepelve* [*Punished for Misbehavior*], Budapest: Szépirodalmi, 1964, p. 99.

[55]"Minutes of the Federal Central Executive Committee, July 15–16, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents . . .*, vol. 6, part 2, pp. 453–471. This body was established during the congress of soviets as an "interim parliament" of the proletariat between the two soviet congresses.

government of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was still unable to "enforce its authority toward counterrevolutionary outbreaks" in Budapest and in the countryside, feed the industrial proletariat and the Red Army, or put an end to the "flourishing corruption" in the government bureaucracy. Although it remained unsaid at the conference, the roots of these "crises" lay partly in the congenital defects of the proletarian revolution and partly in the absence of external aid from Russia or some other East European soviet republic yet to be formed.

By the middle of July it had become painfully clear that the decision to retreat from Slovakia was a fatal strategic and tactical mistake. The withdrawal had irreparably damaged the national pride of the trade-union battalions, caused mass desertions from the Red Army, and induced the Czech army—contrary to the provision of the Clemenceau note—to pursue the dejected Hungarian units. At this point, the much-talked-about "brotherly aid from the Russian Army" was already three months overdue. A brief review of Russian military history in the spring of 1919 shows that the last opportunity for the joining of Russian and Hungarian forces had actually been lost as early as May.

According to the prominent Russian civil war commander V. Antonov-Ovseenko, the Ukrainian Red Army had received an order on March 25 to stop its advance toward the Black Sea and Rumania and "to advance westward to the border of southeastern Galicia and Bessarabia. The latter was important in establishing immediate ties with the troops of the Hungarian Soviet."[56] The Ukrainians, however, had first recaptured Odessa and then embarked on an ambitious frontal attack in hope of occupying northern Moldavia and Bessarabia before making contact with the Hungarian troops.[57] Lenin, evidently dismayed by Rakovsky's conduct of the campaign, had cabled him in April "again reminding" him to proceed with the attack on Bukovina.[58] Lenin's reminders were reinforced by the Bolshevik central committee's threat of a party court trial should

[56] V. Antonov-Ovseenko, *Zapiski o Grazhdanskoi Voine* [*Notes on the Civil War*], vol. 3, Moscow: Gos. Voenn. Izdat., 1933, p. 324.

[57] *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 30.

[58] *Leninski Sbornik* [*Lenin Miscellany*], vol. 36, Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1959, p. 74. See also V. I. Lenin, "Telegram to Serpukhov, April 22, 1919," in Jan M. Meijer (ed.), *The Trotsky Papers*, vol. 1, 1917–1919, The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1964, p. 375.

Rakovsky fail to comply with these new orders.[59] On April 25, the Bolshevik Politburo, bypassing Rakovsky, had sent special instructions to the commander of the Ukrainian front to "establish direct contacts with Hungary,"[60] but in early May, when the Ukrainian forces were about to launch a major westward attack, Ataman Grigoriev, one of the Bolshevik commanders, had organized a large-scale mutiny which tied down several loyal Bolshevik units for at least three weeks.[61] During the time lost by Rakovsky's disobedience and the Grigoriev mutiny the Rumanian and Polish armies had met and effectively sealed the road to Hungary, and at the same time Denikin had attacked from the south. By the end of June the Russian Red Army had been pushed so far to the north that the establishment of contact with Hungary through Soviet Slovakia was impossible.

Although Béla Kun was lacking in detailed information on the Ukrainian situation, his conclusion was that the debacle had been the result of outright sabotage by Rakovsky and Chicherin, who had no serious intention of aiding the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Lenin, in a letter to Kun written in late June, went to great lengths to dispel these suspicions, but he could offer no help other than assurances of sympathy.[62] Kun should have realized that the Russian Bolsheviks were more concerned with a war waged in defense of their own revolution than with aid to deserving communists abroad. He himself had abandoned Slovakia under the flag of "proletarian-communist chauvinism" in June and could scarcely expect a different attitude from the Bolsheviks a month later. It is quite possible that he resented

[59] "On the Cernovic line of advance the issue is one of easing the lot of Hungary. It is the duty of the Ukrainian comrades to exert every effort for the above two-fold task in the same way as we are concentrating our forces for the Eastern front." Leon Trotsky, "Telegram to Rakovsky, Podvoiski, Antonov, April 19, 1919," in *ibid.*, pp. 365–366.

[60] M. Gorky *et al.* (eds.), *Istoriia Grazhdanskoi Voiny* [*History of the Civil War*], vol. 4, Moscow: Gos. Izd. Pol. Lit., 1959, p. 71.

[61] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

[62] "Dear Comrade Kun! Please do not worry too much and do not despair. Your charges or suspicions against Chicherin and Rakovsky lack absolutely any foundations. We all work in full harmony. We know of Hungary's difficult and dangerous situation and do everything we can. Quick help, however, is physically impossible. Try to maintain yourselves as long as circumstances permit. Every week is valuable. Procure reserves for Budapest and strengthen that city. I hope you will take [certain] measures that I suggested to the Bavarians. With firm handshake and best wishes. Hold yourselves with all your strength, the victory will be ours. Your Lenin." *Lenin Miscellany*, vol. 36, p. 79.

the Russians' failure to organize several assault divisions from Hungarian former prisoners of war in the Red Army, who probably would have been able to make a breakthrough in April via southern Galicia to reach Hungary in May. However, since the Russians had refused to form any pure nationality units for this purpose, and because they needed the foreign internationalists on the Siberian front to defend their own revolution, Kun had no choice but to accept the logic of this policy.

After the resounding failure of the international solidarity strike of July 21 organized by the Comintern to relieve some of the Entente pressure from the Hungarians, the last hope of outside aid faded, and the Hungarian Soviet government was left to its fate.[63] At this point—although one might expect more for the record than hope of a miracle—Kun sent a last-minute appeal to Lenin:[64]

> R[udnyánszky], Moscow. Inform L[enin] of the following:
>
> I have already exceeded all limits of my patience regardless of Ch[icherin's] and R[akovsky's] supposedly harmonious cooperation with the party's Central Committee. I consider it a complete lack of cooperation that we were beaten by Rumanian troops from the Bessarabian front. Forcing Rak[ovsky] on the Ukrainians against their wish, in my opinion, will be an irreparable mistake.
>
> I am rather afraid that in the next few days the Czechs and the Rumanians will launch a concerted attack which would mean our fall . . . Our territory is so small that we have no room for retreat. If there will not be an offensive on Bessarabia, I shall put the responsibility on those who falsely informed Lenin, even at the time I was in Russia.

In his brief reply Lenin again cleared the accused Rakovsky and

[63]At least this must have been Kun's impression after receiving Chicherin's cable of July 29: "We concluded from all evidence that the Entente is in no position to attack Hungary. . . . Today we learned that the Supreme Council of the Entente in Paris had sent a cablegram to Hungary offering to put an end to the blockade and send food if the Hungarian people would overthrow the Soviet government. . . . We are certain the Hungarian people will not trade its freedom for bread . . . and will go on fighting for the achievements of the proletarian revolution." Mrs. Sándor Gábor (ed.), "Dokumentumok Szovjet-Oroszország és a Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Kapcsolatairól [Documents on the Foreign Relations of Soviet Russia and the Hungarian Soviet Republic]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények*, no. 1, 1961, p. 227.

[64]"Draft of Cable sent to Endre Rudnyánszky for Transmission to Lenin, July 28, 1919," in Institute for Party History, *Selected Documents* . . . , vol. 6, part 2, pp. 545–546.

Chicherin of any wrongdoing and informed Kun that within the foreseeable future no help could be expected from Russia.[65]

The Revolutionary Governing Council and the party executive held their first and last joint session on August 1, 1919. The meeting was confronted with the news of the Hungarian Red Army's latest setback at the eastern and southern front and with the *fait accompli* of a trade-union government made up of right and center socialists who claimed to have engaged Entente support. After a last-minute appeal by Szamuely for the continuation of armed resistance, the joint party-government meeting resolved to resign and hand over its power to a caretaker trade-union government. The decision to terminate the Hungarian Soviet Republic was submitted to the plenary session of the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on the same day. After Zoltán Rónai's report in behalf of the socialists, Béla Kun took to the rostrum to deliver his farewell speech for the Hungarian communists:[66]

> The proletariat of Hungary betrayed not their leaders but themselves. After a most careful weighing [of facts] . . . I have been forced to come to this cold sobering conclusion: the dictatorship of the proletariat has been defeated economically, militarily, and politically.
>
> It need not have fallen had there been order here. Even if the transition to socialism had been economically and politically impossible . . . if there had been a class-conscious revolutionary proletariat [in Hungary], then the dictatorship of the proletariat would not have fallen in this way.
>
> I would have preferred a different ending. I would have liked to see the proletariat fighting on the barricades . . . declaring that it would rather die than abandon its rule. Then I thought: are we to man the barricades ourselves without the masses? Although we would have willingly sacrificed ourselves . . . would it have served the interests of the international world revolution . . . to make another Finland in Hungary?

65 "Last night Lenin requested me to transmit the following: 'I assure Comrade Béla Kun that Rakovsky had been appointed by the full Central Committee, and we are satisfied with him. We are doing everything possible to help our Hungarian friends, but our forces are small. Our victory in the Urals has liberated Hungarian prisoners of war whom we shall transfer rapidly to the Ukrainian and Rumanian fronts. Lenin.' " Text of Rudnyánszky's cable of July 31, 1919, to Béla Kun in *ibid.*, p. 552. Trotsky's letter to the Central Committee was more realistic on this point: "The road to India may prove at the given moment to be more readily passable and shorter for us than the road to Soviet Hungary." Meijer, *The Trotsky Papers,* p. 623.

66 Quoted in Böhm, *In the Crossfire . . .*, pp. 462–463. For Lenin's eulogy on the fallen Hungarian Soviet Republic see V. I. Lenin, "Speech at the Nonparty Worker-Red Army Conference of Aug. 6, 1919," *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], 3d ed., vol. 24, Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1931, pp. 427–429.

In my opinion, any political change in this country can be only temporary and transitory in character. No one will be able to govern here. The proletariat which was dissatisfied with our government, who, despite every kind of agitation, kept shouting "down with the dictatorship of the proletariat" in their own factories, will be even more dissatisfied with any future government. . . .

Now I see that our experiment to educate the proletarian masses of this country into class-conscious revolutionaries has been in vain. This proletariat needs the most inhumane and cruel dictatorship of the bourgeoisie to become revolutionary.

During the forthcoming transition period, we shall step aside. If possible, we shall endeavor to maintain class unity; if not, we shall fight with other means, so that in the future, with renewed strength, more experience, under more realistic and objective conditions, and with a more mature proletariat, we shall engage in a new battle for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and launch a new phase of the international proletarian revolution.

Following this, Béla Kun and several communist and socialist leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic and their families, under the protection of diplomatic immunity, left for Austria aboard a special train. Szamuely, who traveled separately, committed suicide when apprehended at the Austrian border.[67] Fourteen former people's commissars, Ottó Korvin, Jenő László, and many others who had not been granted safe passage, remained in Hungary to await arrest.

Conclusions

During the second phase of the proletarian revolution the inherent defects of the Soviet Republic had developed into crippling handicaps that eventually caused its demise. The results of the party congress demonstrated that even a temporarily united communist elite could not defeat socialist recalcitrance on such secondary issues as the party's name. It is doubtful that socialist concurrence on the adoption of a communist program (since few of the delegates could fathom the contents of the party program) was more than a hollow gesture for the sake of party unity—an assumption supported by the adoption of uncompromisingly socialist statutes which, in effect, negated whatever the program stood for.

The proceedings of the Congress of Soviets demonstrated the unworkability of communist theses on industry, agriculture, eco-

[67] Endre Rudnyánszky, "Tibor Szamuely," *Pravda*, Aug. 6, 1919; and N. Bukharin, "Tibor Szamuely," *The Communist International*, vol. 1, no. 5, September, 1919, p. 64.

nomic organization, and financial administration. Although the socialists had to share the blame for the introduction of many disfunctional dogmatic measures, the fact remains that it was the communists who had initiated most of these subsequently bankrupt programs. Hence the primary responsibility lay with Kun, Rákosi, Hevesi, and Kelen, and not with Varga, who could not undo the damage of the first few weeks. The outcome of the foreign-policy debate represented the point of no return both for the communist elite and the soviet rule in Hungary. The decision to retreat from Slovakia irrevocably separated the extremist left from the "opportunist center" and deprived the government of the main prop of its popular support.

Kun, misled by a false analogy between Lenin's role at the Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party in March, 1918, in defeating Bukharin and Trotsky on the issue of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and his own goal of gaining a breathing spell for Hungary through defeating Kunfi (on the right) and Szamuely (on the left), believed that a retreat from Slovakia would produce the same results in Hungary as had Lenin's strategy in Russia. What Kun did not realize until the June uprising broke out was that the chemistry of the Hungarian revolution, when deprived of the vital ingredients of nationalism and the immediacy of world revolution, would degenerate into a doomed oligarchy of utopian philosophers, orthodox fanatics, bewildered communist bureaucrats, and ostracized socialists.

Even if there had not been an armed counterrevolutionary attempt following the decision to retreat from Slovakia, the fact remains that, despite his pretensions, Kun was not a Hungarian Lenin. He was a superb organizer, an outstanding public orator, and a very capable journalist. While a rigorous comparison between Kun and Lenin may not be sustained without taking into account Hungary's peculiar political conditions and hopeless military predicament, as well as Kun's intellectual and political attributes, Kun was not a man who by sheer power of intellect could have reestablished genuine party unity after the congressional debacles.[68] This self-appointed leader of the revolution who delegated most ideological disputes to Lukács and Rudas, economic arguments to Varga, mili-

[68] Seton-Watson seems to take a more charitable view of this problem: "Unfavourable geographical and military situation would have ensured the defeat of Soviet Hungary even if Béla Kun had had ten times the genius of Lenin," adding "nevertheless, Kun's faults did contribute to the disaster." Hugh Seton-Watson, *From Lenin to Khrushchev,* New York: Praeger, 1960, p. 62.

tary decisions to the noncommunist General Stromfeld (a military genius from the Austro-Hungarian army), the propaganda apparatus to socialists, and *Vörös Ujság* to communist extremists really had undisputed control over only one instrument of dubious power —the wireless station where he cabled SOS messages to Moscow.

If one were to take the somber drama of Russian Bolshevik strategy of early 1918 as Kun's likely blueprint for his breathing-spell stratagem, then the Hungarian communist record of the final six weeks of the Hungarian Soviet Republic may be characterized—to paraphrase Marx—as a repeat performance of the original tragedy in the form of low comedy. Kun and his followers, suddenly realizing that they were alone before the yawning depths of internal counter-revolution and the certainty of foreign occupation, found belated half-measures, desperate appeals for Russian aid, and the use of reckless terror of no avail in face of the merciless logic of the objective and subjective laws of revolution.

Chapter 9

HUNGARIAN COMMUNISM AND WORLD REVOLUTION: AN AMBIGUOUS LEGACY

Next to the establishment of the Communist International the creation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic represented the most significant, and for some time the only, solid achievement of Bolshevik designs for a world revolution. The very existence of a communist regime in a country not geographically adjacent to Russia appeared both to justify Bolshevik beliefs concerning the universal applicability of the Russian revolutionary experience and to indicate the westward direction of the impending world revolution. In the judgment of the Soviet leadership, it was only a matter of time until both the victors and the vanquished of Europe would undergo crises similar to those which Béla Kun and his followers had successfully escalated into a proletarian revolution in Hungary in March, 1919. It is a matter of historic record that the Hungarian Soviet Republic fell on Aug. 2, 1919, after 133 days of existence.

Hungary, like Russian-occupied Poland and Rumania before the land reform of 1917, had been a political and economic anachronism in Eastern Europe. The country was ruled by a small political establishment whose philosophy, methods, and ruling style had been backward and conservative for the preceding two centuries. Because legitimate opposition to the status quo was not permitted to develop, both middle-class liberal and working-class socialist forces were compelled to operate in a no-man's land between the ruling aristocracy and the disenfranchised rural millions. A result of this imperfect and increasingly unstable political situation was the development of a hybrid working-class movement under the leadership of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. During the quarter-century preceding the revolutions of 1918–1919, Hungarian socialism had become entrenched in an organizational pattern of overlapping trade-union and party membership, an ambivalent ideology consisting of an unresolved mixture of German Marxist orthodoxy and French anarchosyndicalist eclecticism, and the prolonged tenure of an ideologically vulnerable and politically ill-prepared trade-

unionist executive. It was this heritage that was passed on to the Communist Party of Hungary.

The Inherent Defects of the Hungarian Soviet Republic

Syndicalists, revolutionary technocrats, revolutionary socialists, and dissident socialists made up four of the six charter groups of the Communist Party of Hungary. During the bourgeois-democratic phase of the revolution, members of these groups were united in their efforts to overthrow the Károlyi government and its socialist supporters, but they also brought with them distinctive ideologies and their own concepts of the party's role after a victorious revolution.

Ervin Szabó and the syndicalists, who had represented the most important ideological opposition group in the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, had argued for the democratization of internal party procedures, indoctrination efforts, and organizational methods. Regardless of the apparent futility of such efforts before the war, the syndicalists had created an antiauthoritarian, anticentralist, libertarian tradition in the movement, especially among the young leftist intellectuals and, to a lesser extent, among the educated working class.

Similarly, the message of wartime opposition groups—technocrats, pacifists, and anarchists alike—had centered on the working man as standard bearer of a better future, as a human being rather than as a political animal or as potential cannon fodder on the altar of a class struggle against the bourgeoisie.

Such utopian and humanistic traits were also discernible among the tenets of the revolutionary socialists. Ottó Korvin, Ilona Duczynszka, and their revolutionary socialist and Galileist friends had their own concept of the Russian Revolution as an example of syndicalist direct action, and drew inspiration not from Lenin, but from the anarchist Peter Kropotkin (see Chapter 2).

Members of the "old socialist opposition" (Béla Szántó, Béla Vágó, László Rudas) were former party bureaucrats; although they were extremely useful in the initial organization of the Communist Party, they were later considered unprincipled opportunists by the socialists, unworthy of occupying positions of influence in the united party, and were either relegated to the periphery of power or joined the communist left opposition, where they eventually helped to destroy what was left of a tightly organized and disciplined communist party.

Unattached intellectuals, who made up the fifth charter group of the party, also contributed to the breakdown of discipline in the communist ranks. This was especially true of Lukács, with his views on the role of the party in a proletarian revolution, and of the Galileist students, who abandoned the movement shortly after the establishment of the Soviet Republic.

The establishment of a second central committee to replace the imprisoned "first team" marked the end of the apparent communist ideological unity. Instead of continuing Kun's Bolshevik strategy and tactics, József Révai, György Lukács, and the rest of the party's temporary leaders began to promote anarchist, syndicalist, and other non-Bolshevik views as strategic solutions to the transformation of the working-class discontent into an armed uprising. After the communist-socialist pact of unity, the extreme left members of these groups joined forces against Kun, who was alleged to have betrayed the party by this "unprincipled alliance." Others, the technocrats in particular, did not form an antiparty opposition group, but they achieved the same result by insisting on doctrinaire solutions to the grave economic and social problems of the Soviet Republic.

These were the ideological liabilities brought into the Communist Party by five of its six member groups. The sixth group was comprised of Béla Kun's Hungarian Bolsheviks. Former prisoner-of-war socialists, who represented the hard-core majority in the first central committee, performed extremely well in the first bourgeois phase of the revolution. As party leaders in the Soviet Republic, however, they were of dubious value. With the exception of Kun, Szamuely, and Vántus, they never fully comprehended the totality of revolutionary changes in Russia, and hence were unable to imaginatively translate and make optimum use of the Russian pattern, in adapting it to Hungarian conditions. Since their servile adherence to Kun's directives qualified them as reliable couriers to Moscow or to Vienna but not as political leaders, rather than being given a share of the decision making, they were relegated to insignificant positions or sent to the front. As a result, they were unable to give effective support to Kun against the left opposition and the socialists.

Owing to their lack of experience in the Hungarian workers' movement and to their bloodthirsty tendencies, Tibor Szamuely and the group of left extremists who joined him could not become full-fledged members of the communist and left-socialist center that guided the fortunes of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. Szamuely's

image of the Russian Revolution and the civil war, both of which he viewed essentially as military operations and opportunities for an unrestrained exercise of individual terror, was based on a faulty perception of the real nature of events in Russia. Therefore his arguments concerning communist strategy and tactics were of limited usefulness, and were ultimately detrimental to both.

This leads us to Béla Kun, the leader of the Communist Party of Hungary and the moving spirit behind the Soviet Republic. During his stay in Russia Kun had been exposed to many facets of Russian socialist politics—the Bolshevik conflicts with the social revolutionaries and the Mensheviks, Bolsheviks' strategy and tactics during the dual-power period, the results of armed uprisings in October of 1917, the impact of decrees on land and peace, and Lenin's breathing-spell strategy. It is doubtful, however, that he completely understood the "lessons of October" or fully appreciated the reasoning behind subsequent Bolshevik policies. For example, he viewed Lenin's Land Decree as a mere tactical compromise to the social revolutionaries, a concession to be withdrawn at the first possible moment. Such measures of war communism as the requisitioning of grain in the summer of 1918 may have tended to reinforce this mistaken belief.

Another of Kun's major errors was his orthodox Marxist disregard for the revolutionary, and particularly the military potential of nationalism and patriotism. Lenin correctly pointed out that while the Bolsheviks in Russia faced the dual challenge of imperialist intervention and anticommunist patriotism of the bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie, the latter aspect was absent in Hungary when the proletarian revolution broke out on March 21, 1919.[1] Although in the spring of 1918 Kun had envisaged a two-stage revolution in Hungary (first "nationalistic and anti-German," second "nationalistic and proletarian"); later, conceivably under Bukharin's or Trotsky's influence, he dropped the promising formula of "nationalism *cum* revolutionary fervor" in favor of a pure dictatorship of the proletariat at home and permanent revolution abroad (see Chapter 3). Evidently he mistook a solution forced on the Russians by virtue of Russian circumstances (such as the antipatriotic aspect of the

[1] V. I. Lenin, "Speech at the Closing Session of the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), March 23, 1919," *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], 4th ed., vol. 29, Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin Institute, 1951, p. 200ff.

breathing-spell strategy) as one equally valid for Hungary; hence he failed to utilize the anti-Entente nationalist *resentment* in Hungary at a time when a solid front of national resistance could at least temporarily have tipped the scale in favor of the fledgling Hungarian Soviet Republic.

Paradoxically, Kun's main liability as a "graduate of the Russian revolution" lay in the fact that he never fully subscribed to the universal validity of Lenin's strategic and tactical solutions as applicable to Hungary. Actually he appears to have considered both Russian people and Russian politics barbaric and inferior to Hungarians in general and to the level of Hungarian socialist political consciousness in particular. This ambivalent attitude resulted in a contradictory set of conclusions concerning the applicability of the Russian experience. Kun did not understand (or chose not to consider) Lenin's prudent agrarian strategy. He also disregarded the strategic potential of petty-bourgeois nationalism utilized for revolutionary ends and ignored the necessity of maintaining the elite character of the proletarian party after a victorious revolution.

Despite his assertions of profound knowledge of Bolshevik history, Kun did not truly appreciate Lenin's insistence on a tightly knit vanguard type of party, firmly controlled by the central committee, especially in the dangerously unstable period following the proletarian revolution. He evidently mistook the temporary split that followed the Brest-Litovsk debates for a lasting schism in the Russian party, and thus he failed to realize that the Bolsheviks' unity was essentially intact after the Bukharin factionalist interlude came to an end in March, 1918. Therefore, a year later under similar circumstances, he could not prevent the loss of his party's organizational integrity after the socialist merger, nor could he prevent dissenters in the communist ranks from obstructing his policies and weakening his bargaining position with the Entente and the socialist trade-unionist establishment.

Kun had proved himself an extremely able politician in imaginatively utilizing the Russian dual-power strategy in Hungary during the bourgeois-democratic revolution of 1918. However, the intellectual and personal attributes that had served him so well in Russia—and in Hungary until his ascendancy to power—seem to have failed him when it came to providing leadership for his party, formulating policies for the proletarian government, and steering Soviet Hungary through the stormy Europe of 1919.

There is sufficient evidence that the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919 was doomed from the time of its inception by a variety of internal historical, institutional, environmental, psychological, ideological, and personal factors militating against the lasting success of a communist revolution. A comparison of the external aspects of the two Hungarian revolutions with those of the Russian revolution of October, 1917, and the German revolution of November, 1918, will illustrate this point.

In Russia continued hostilities on the front and the German attack of February, 1918, actually contributed to the Bolsheviks' success and indirectly enabled the Soviet leaders to consolidate their power in the critical first six months following the October Revolution.[2] Although Russia's territorial integrity was seriously jeopardized by the subsequent German occupation of the Ukraine and Belorussia, it is important to recall that even after the humiliating Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, in the absence of a recognized alternative national leadership, only the Bolsheviks could offer a hope for the reversal of this defeat at the first opportune moment. Thus in Russia the continuation of war was a crucial factor in perpetrating revolutionary conditions and contributing to the consolidation of Bolshevik rule.

In Germany the end of the war was marked by a relatively peaceful transfer of power from the war cabinet to the socialists. Although the Independent Socialists and the Spartacists pressed for the implementation of a maximum socialist program, and the Spartacists were, in fact, prepared to fight for it, the Ebert-led majority socialists remained in firm control and prevented the extreme left from taking advantage of the revolutionary opportunities to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat in Germany.[3] A speedy demobilization of the army, internal disunity among the socialists, the physical elimination of Luxemburg and Liebknecht, and the subsequent "marriage of convenience" between Ebert and the General Staff effectively prevented a further radical swing of the bourgeois-democratic

[2] Internally the Bolsheviks were aided considerably, for example, by the absence of a Russian equivalent (Kornilov-Kerensky) of the Ebert-Groener alliance that could have foiled the political ascendancy of the Soviets between November, 1917, and February, 1918.

[3] Charles B. Burdick and Ralph H. Lutz (eds.), *The Political Institutions of the German Revolution*, 1918–1919, New York: Praeger, 1966.

revolution in Germany.[4] Although Germany was defeated militarily, a foreign invasion (in view of the well-working *entente sanitaire* and the availability of untapped manpower on the eastern front) would have been both unnecessary and impractical. Thus, in spite of continued Free Corps activities in Silesia and elsewhere, the war ended for Germany in November, 1918, and by virtue of the relatively stable internal balance of power which permitted the holding of elections in January, 1919, a civil war and proletarian revolution were averted while Germany was still in the bourgeois-democratic stage.

Hungary's case was a mixed one; the war was over, but largely as a result of the ambiguously worded, unenforceable Belgrade armistice agreement of Nov. 13, 1918, fighting between advance units of the Serbian, Rumanian, and Czech armies and Hungarian frontier guards went on with little regard to the wishes of the not yet convened Paris Peace Conference. If we assume from the example of Germany that Hungary's bourgeois-democratic revolution was a product of or was made possible by the end of the war, then with a somewhat liberal interpretation of the Russian case it may be argued that the Károlyi government's internal support deteriorated in direct proportion to the progress of the undeclared border war along Hungary's southern, eastern, and northern frontiers until both the frontier conflicts and the government's loss of authority reached their logical and ultimate conclusions: the Vyx *aide memoire* (or rather ultimatum) of March 19, 1919, and the launching of the Hungarian Soviet Republic two days later. With this desperate step, Hungary was back at war again. Since Kun failed to produce a "Hungarian Brest-Litovsk" during the Smuts visit in April, 1919, he was forced to rely on the socialists' "social-patriotic" support, and when that seemed to falter, to arrange for a belated breathing-spell strategy by retreating from Slovakia.

Unlike Germany, Hungary had no opportunity to solidify the achievements of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, but was driven to a communist dictatorship to avert the imminent military occupation of Hungary by the Entente. Upon reaching the proletarian stage

[4] In this context the shortlived Bavarian Soviet Republic is of marginal importance. On the Bavarian events see Allen Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria, 1918–1919: The Eisner Regime and the Soviet Republic,* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965.

of the revolution, however, Hungary could not benefit from those external factors of time and geography—the concentration of German and potentially anticommunist Allied military forces on the western front in 1918 and the vastness of Russia's territory, which permitted strategic retreats and temporary losses of areas of several times the size of Hungary without drastically impairing Bolshevik control over the unoccupied area of Russia—which enabled the Bolsheviks to remain in power against the combined military might of the White armies and the Allied expeditionary armies.

The lack of success of the Béla Kun-led political experiment did not deter the defeated Hungarian Bolsheviks and the Soviet leadership from undertaking a rigorous post-mortem examination of the Hungarians' record in order to salvage that which was still useful from the wreck of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

The Lessons of 1919 for the Communist Party of Hungary

The fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was a major setback not only for the vanquished communists, but for the forces of progress and democracy in Hungary as well. The real tragedy was that the defeated Kun regime had been established on the ruins of the democratic revolution of 1918 as if it were a natural consequence. The ambiguity of this situation provided the authoritarian "pre-Fascist" Horthy regime *carte blanche* to equate democracy and liberalism with Bolshevism and terror and dissent with treason. The swing of the pendulum also reinforced some of the worst latent political and ideological traits of the Hungarian Christian middle class, representing the main social prop of the regime—antiliberalism, anti-Semitism, and unbridled irredentism and chauvinism.

In the long run the human element seems to be the most significant loss suffered by Hungary as a consequence of the defeated revolution. During the first few years of the Horthy regime, not only were 5,000 men and women executed and 75,000 jailed for their alleged complicity with the communists in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, but over 100,000 people fled the country.[5] Some of these

[5] For official data on the victims of White terror in Hungary see Albert Váry, *A Vörös Uralom Áldozatai Magyarországon* [*Victims of the Red Rule in Hungary*], Budapest: 1923, pp. 2–10. For communist data on Hungarian refugees of the White terror see Magda Aranyossi, "A Franciaországi Magyar Munkás-Emigrácio Történetéhez [On the History of Hungarian Worker-Emigrants in France]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 3, 1961, pp. 60–64.

emigrants were communists, socialists, and organized worker-activists, but most of them were liberal politicians, democratic intellectuals (artists, scientists, and scholars), and a great number of urban middle-class Jews—men and women who could have become the social backbone of democracy and progress in Hungary had they not been forced to flee before the "White terror."

The "fugitive Bolsheviks" who had managed to leave the country in August, 1919, soon reassembled abroad and proceeded to critically examine the causes for the failure of the proletarian revolution in Hungary. This process almost immediately degenerated into a factional battle between the followers of Kun and the disciples of Jenő Landler.[6] During the course of the intraparty struggle which lasted for more than ten years, a veritable flood of articles, pamphlets, and books appeared, each trying to provide the one answer to the fiasco of 1919. The Landler faction argued that Kun—through such acts as his use of corrupt and dictatorial methods, his unprincipled merger with the socialists, his withholding from the central committee information and advice from Lenin, his sabotage of communist attempts to rebuild the party after the congress, his desertion of the Vienna coup of June 15, his acceptance of the Clemenceau note, and in the end his embezzlement of funds—was personally responsible for the defeat.[7]

The Kun faction offered its own assessment of the failure—a set of views which the Comintern subsequently approved with modifications as the "coroner's report" of the case. The gist of this official

[6]As far as it can be established, the Landler faction included the survivors of the Szamuely-led left opposition and an assortment of anti-Kun communists such as Ernő Bettelheim, Henrik Guttman, Béla Szántó and László Rudas. To the Kun faction belonged Jenő Varga, the former prisoner-of-war Bolsheviks, Endre Rudnyánszky (the Hungarian Soviet representative in Moscow), Béla Vágó, and for some time, Mátyás Rákosi.

[7]Cf. Henrik Ungar [Henrik Guttman], *Die Magyarische Pest in Moskau,* Leipzig-Zürich-Wien: 1921; Ernest Bettelheim, *Zur Krise der Kommunistischen Partei Ungarns,* Vienna: 1922; Ladislaus Rudas, *Abenteuerer und Liquidatorentum: Die Politik Bela Kuns and die Krise der K.P.U.,* Vienna: 1922. For the official Comintern refutation of charges contained in these items of factional literature see *Die Taktik der Kommunistischen Internationale gegen die Offensive des Kapitals: Bericht über die Konferenz der Erweiterten Exekutive der K.I. Moskau, vom* 24 *Februar bis* 4 *März,* 1922, Hamburg: C. Hoym, 1922; and *Bericht über die Tatigkeit des Präsidiums und der Exekutive der Kommunistischen Internationale durch die Zeit vom* 6 *März bis* 11 *Juni,* 1922, Hamburg: Kommunistischen Internationale, 1922.

evaluation identified five causes of the defeat of the Hungarian Soviet Republic:[8] (1) the merger with the socialists without adequate guarantees, and hence the loss of the party's organizational and ideological identity; (2) the communists' orthodox Marxist agrarian policy, resulting in their failure to obtain support from the village poor, the would-be beneficiaries of land reform; (3) the communists' unwillingness to enlist the support of the patriotic middle class and bourgeoisie through tactical slogans of territorial integrity, and thus their inability to turn the defense of the proletarian republic into a national enterprise; (4) the excessive socialization program in industry and commerce, improper methods of rural agitation and propaganda, and the inability to assure the continuity of production in the factories and failure to provide adequate food supplies for the proletariat and the Red Army; and (5) an unfavorable constellation of external factors such as the imperialist encirclement of Hungary, the receding wave of international revolutionary movements (thwarted proletarian revolutions in Bavaria, Austria, and the betrayal by Western European reformist socialists), and the military impossibility of armed aid from Soviet Russia.

The correctness of this assessment was of only academic importance to the Hungarian party during the fifteen years following the ill-fated revolution; in an effort to prevent further factional disputes the Comintern dissolved the party in 1921, and partial reorganizations in 1925, 1927, and 1928 could not resuscitate its

[8] Balázs Kolozsváry [Béla Kun], *Forradalomrol Forradalomra* [*From Revolution to Revolution*], Vienna: A Kommunisták Németausztriai Pártja, 1920; Béla Kun, "Néhány Megjegyzés Jóhiszeműek Számára: Utóhang [Some Remarks for the Naïve: An Epilogue]," in G. Zinoviev and Karl Radek (eds.), *Mit Mond a III. Internacionálé a Magyarországi Proletárforradalomról* [*The Third International on the Hungarian Proletarian Revolution*], Vienna: A Kommunisták Németausztriai Pártja, 1920, pp. 25–48; Béla Kun, *Marxista Elmélet—Forradalmi Gyakorlat (Marxist Theory—Revolutionary Practice)*, Moscow: Az OKP Magyar Agitációs Osztálya Központi Irodája, 1920; Béla Kun, "A Pártok Szerepe a Diktatúra Keletkezésében [The Role of Parties in the Birth of the Dictatorship]," *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaságról* [*On the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, pp. 418–450; and Jenő Varga, *A Földkérdés a Magyar Proletárforradalomban* [*The Land Question in the Hungarian Proletarian Revolution*], Ekaterinburg: Tsentral'noe Biuro Vengerskoi Sektsii pri Ts. K. R.K.P.(b), 1920. The most important critical modification of the Kun faction's evaluation came from Lenin in the form of remarks on Varga's book. See V. I. Lenin, "Zamechanii na Knigu E. Varge 'Die Wirtschaftpolitischen Probleme der Proletarischen Diktatur' [Remarks on Varga's Book, 'The Economic Problems of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat']," *Leninski Sbornik* [*Lenin Miscellany*], vol. 7, Moscow-Leningrad: Lenin Institute, 1928, pp. 335–384.

shattered organization in Hungary proper. Hungarian communists were gravely handicapped by the legacy of 1919, by the lack of adequate communication with Moscow, and by the development of internal non-Muscovite groups in the early 1930s. After the leftist turn of the Sixth Comintern Congress of 1928, Moscow's directives for reactivation of party life in Hungary bore increasingly less relevance to the real problems of the Hungarian workers' movement, and the Moscow-based Hungarian leadership succeeded in completely alienating the organized workers from the communist cause.

During the 1930s a new generation of communists—not burdened by the responsibility for 1919—came of age in Hungary. Among them were Lászlo Rajk, János Kádár, and some university groups in the provinces. Isolated from Moscow and ostracized by the socialists, they split into several revisionist, Trotskyist, and syndicalist groups in their search for more efficacious ways of rebuilding the Communist Party. Because of the disturbing presence of deviationist groups and the obvious impossibility of establishing a communist-influenced popular front in Hungary, the party was dissolved in 1936. In these years new non-Marxist leftist groups had come into being to fill the void of leftist dissent. The Populists, the most prominent of these groups, took advantage of their unprecedented mass appeal to expound a non-Marxist political-economic ideology designed to serve as a guideline for Hungary after the expected fall of the Horthy regime. With its complete disappearance from the Hungarian left, and with the emergence of indigenous opposition forces, the long agony of the Communist Party of Hungary was over in 1939.

The party's demise in Hungary coincided with the death of its founder, Béla Kun, who was shot on November 30 of that year in Moscow. When the Soviet Republic of Hungary had fallen in August of 1919, many of the Hungarian communist refugees had joined the work of Austrian, German, Czechoslovak, and French communist parties. Newspapers such as the *Rote Fahne,* and the *Inprekorr* staff in Berlin had sizable Hungarian contingents whose members (Béla Szántó, György Lukács, Gyula Alpári) performed valuable services before 1933, when nearly all of them fled to the Soviet Union. Béla Kun, Jenő Varga, Mátyás Rákosi (before his arrest in 1925), and József Pogány (before he fell into disgrace around 1928) were entrusted with influential positions at various agencies of the Communist International. István Bierman became a member of the Cen-

tral Committee, Communist Party of the Ukraine, József Kelen directed the Heat Energy Trust, Jenő Varga became the leading Soviet expert on capitalist economy, Imre Bogár directed the Moscow Agrarian Institute, Jenő Hamburger became deputy director of the Moscow Institute of Radiology, and many others were given responsible assignments in the Soviet government, economy, and cultural life.

Most of these men, in addition to their immediate functions, were also responsible for certain spheres of work in directing the activities of the Hungarian communists from Moscow. However, in view of the singularly inept performance of the party in Hungary, they were of decreasing usefulness to the Comintern and to the Soviet party. When Stalin's views on the Russian October Revolution, first pronounced in February, 1933, at the First All-Union Congress of Collective Farm Shock Workers,[9] by implication denied the admissibility of the Hungarian Soviet Republic as a bona fide proletarian revolution, the Hungarian veterans of a revolution that *never was* found themselves and their political credentials in an increasingly precarious position.[10] Except for a few lucky ones, such as Lukács, and those who were in some way connected with the secret police or Stalin's personal secretariat, such as Révai and Varga,[11] the Great Purges justified their apprehensions. Nineteen former people's commissars and untold scores of lesser Hungarian communists were killed or placed in concentration camps, thus providing the final "lesson of 1919."

The Lessons of 1919 for the Russian Communist Party and the International Communist Movement

The establishment of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic had represented the first result of efforts by Bolsheviks and renegade

[9] J. V. Stalin, "Speech Delivered at the First All-union Congress of Collective Farm Shock Workers," *Works,* vol. 13, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955, p. 246.

[10] Ervin Sinkó, *Egy Regény Regénye* [*The Novel of a Novel*], vol. 2, Novisad: Forum, 1961, p. 99ff. Sinkó, a former member of the "Tolstoyan ethical socialist" right communist opposition in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, gives a fascinating account of the life of the Hungarian colony in Moscow, including the anxieties caused by Stalin's hostility toward exile communist veterans of the Hungarian, German, and Austrian parties.

[11] For an eye-witness account of Kun's "trial" by a Comintern "court" (members were Dimitrov, Manuilsky, Togliatti (Ercoli), Kuusinen, Pieck, Gottwald, Florin, Van-Mine, and Tuominen) see "Togliatti: Assassino di Communisti," a supplement to the Italian revisionist *Documenti sul Communismo,* republished in *Est & Ouest* (Paris), vol. 15, no. 293, Feb. 1–15, 1963, pp. 8–9.

socialists to spread the world revolution by exporting the successful Russian revolutionary pattern adapted to the conditions of another country. Though the communist experiment in Hungary was decisively defeated, it provided Lenin and the Bolshevik leaders with a most useful laboratory specimen on which to test their views on a wide range of problems facing the Bolsheviks both as engineers of a new society in Russia and as chief promoters of revolutions abroad. Some of these lessons tended to reinforce Bolshevik beliefs in the correctness of their course thus far; others provided new insights into some unresolved issues; still others helped the Soviet leaders to foresee at least the outlines of certain future problems of Russia and the international working-class movement.

According to Zinoviev, the Hungarian socialists were the chief culprits of the ill-fated experiment. It was they who, having absorbed the communist organization, destroyed the revolutionary élan of the working class and sold out to the imperialists, causing the demise of the Soviet Republic:[12]

> The lessons of our Hungarian communist brothers should not go unheeded. Their party opened the door to yesterday's Social Democratic compromisers. . . . Sufficient justification was found for that at the beginning. We all share this error with our Hungarian communist comrades. . . . We trusted the solemn vows of the Hungarian Social Democrats to support the Soviet government. . . .
>
> Communists of all countries must now take this severe lesson into account. In this difficult but great period of acute struggle, which is everywhere changing into civil war, the least digression, the smallest error, the most minute compromise with the opportunists may lead to fateful consequences. The Third International should once and for all do away with the weaknesses peculiar to the Second International. Not the slightest concession to opportunism! Not the least trust in the old generation of prostitute leaders! We must understand that the old official social democracy is our mortal foe. This is the lesson to be derived from the Hungarian events.

In retrospect this obituary fully vindicated Bolshevik policies toward their less reliable partners, the left social revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. The thesis was also meaningful in view of Lenin's changed approach to the organizational dynamics of the Communist International. His new views, which entailed redefining the loose

[12] Grigory Zinoviev, "Two Dates," *The Communist International*, vol. 1, no. 5, August, 1919, p. 13.

structure and *modus operandi* of the Comintern[13] as a monolithic, Russian-controlled fortress of world revolution,[14] had gradually evolved from late 1919 on and climaxed with his "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Second Congress of the Communist International" in July, 1920.

In the course of his polemics with Western European, and particularly French, left socialists, Lenin issued stern warnings against being deceived by reformist socialists who try to escape the irresistable mass appeal of communism by "verbally recognizing the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet power, while in fact remaining enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat . . . not able to fully understand its significance and [in effect] betraying it in real life."[15]

In his definitive treatise on Marxist strategy and tactics,[16] in addition to summarizing the most important lessons of Bolshevik history, Lenin implied a great deal about the mistakes of the Hungarian party in 1919. If he had harbored any doubts concerning the need for "absolute centralization and the strictest discipline of the proletariat" in the struggle against the bourgeoisie, the record of Béla Kun's party provided him with more than sufficient proof of the applicability of this formula outside Russia as well. When he argued in connection with the Bolsheviks' performance in 1905 that "defeated armies learn their lesson well," he undoubtedly also had the Hungarian communists in mind. The Hungarians, while correctly attempting to utilize the "fundamental principles of communism" had failed dismally in "modifying these principles in particulars" to suit Hungary's specific political conditions.

[13]As expounded, for example, in the "Guiding Principles of the Communist International, March 1919," in Mrs. Sándor Gábor *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai* [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 5, Nov. 7, 1917–March 21, 1919, Budapest: Szikra, 1955, pp. 621–625.

[14]For a useful summary of this process of reevaluation see David T. Cattell, "The Hungarian Revolution of 1919 and the Reorganization of the Comintern in 1920," *Journal of Central European Affairs*, vol. 11, January–April, 1951, pp. 27–38.

[15]V. I. Lenin, "Zametki Publitsista [A Journalist's Remarks]," *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], 2nd ed., vol. 25, Moscow: Partizdat, 1928, p. 32. Similar admonitions were addressed to the Italian communists in December, 1920. Cf. Lenin, "Falshivye Rechi o Svobode [False Chatter about Freedom]," *ibid.*, pp. 436–437. See also James W. Hulse, *The Forming of the Communist International*, Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1964, pp. 151–169.

[16]V. I. Lenin, *Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disease of Communism*, New York: International Publishers, 1934, pp. 10–13, 71–72.

By the time the Second Comintern Congress convened and heard the Hungarian party's official version of the fiasco in a speech delivered by Mátyás Rákosi,[17] Lenin was firmly convinced that the Comintern had to undergo a thorough reorganization if it were to remain controlled by the Russian vanguard of the world revolution and become a sharp tool in the international class struggle of the proletariat.[18] He urged the assembled delegates to reevaluate their respective revolutionary techniques in view of a correct adaptation of the "fundamental principles of communism" to their homelands, to identify the immediate tasks in paving the road to a full implementation of such modifications, and to guard themselves against falling prey to reformist socialist temptations and repeating the leftist mistakes of the Russian, German, and Hungarian communists.

The net result of these theses was the drafting and adoption of the "Twenty-one Conditions of Admission into the Communist International." The warning in the preamble to the conditions was unmistakable: "No Communist should forget the lessons of the Hungarian Soviet Republic. The alliance between the Hungarian communists and the so-called 'Left' social-democrats cost the Hungarian proletariat dearly."[19] Of the twenty-one stipulations, at least eleven bore direct or indirect relevance to the mistakes in Hungary, which were thus utilized for the edification of the international communist community in years to come:

Strict adherence of party agitprop work to the program and the decisions of the Comintern and subordination of the press to the party's Central Committee (the dichotomy of *Népszava* and *Vörös Ujság*);

The removal of all reformist elements from all responsible posts and their replacement by communists (Kun's failure to remove the trade-union leaders from the party in May, 1919);

Efficacious agitprop work in the countryside to win the support of the rural poor and to neutralize the rest of the peasantry (the com-

[17] Mathias Rakoczy [Mátyás Rákosi], "Rapport du Parti Communiste Hongrois," *Le Mouvement Communiste International: Rapports, Addresses au Deuxieme Congres de l'Internationale Communiste,* 1920, Petrograd: Editions de l'Internationale Communiste, 1921, pp. 35–39.

[18] These views were embodied in Lenin's "Theses on the Fundamental Tasks of the Communist International," in *Theses Presented to the Second World Congress of the Communist International,* Petrograd-Moscow: Editions of the Communist International, 1920, pp. 93ff.

[19] "The Twenty-one Conditions of Admission into the Communist International," in Robert A. Goldwin *et al.* (eds.), *Readings in Russian Foreign Policy,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1959, pp. 350ff.

munist fiasco in the rural department of the party secretariat);

Renunciation of all social pacifism and social patriotism (Zsigmond Kunfi at the foreign-policy debate at the Congress of Soviets);

Creation and maintenance of communist cells in trade unions and workers' councils (the makeup of the Budapest Workers' Council);

Party control of all party factions and their subordination to the Central Committee (Tibor Szamuely's group of left opposition);

Periodic purges in ruling or legal parties (abortive attempts to reorganize the party after the congress of June, 1919);

The drafting of a communist program (Kun's failure to secure the passage of the communist statutes to implement the adopted communist program);

The binding character of Comintern decisions on national parties (the Hungarian socialists' refusal to abide by the Zinoviev letter and adopt the name "communist").

The record of the Hungarian Soviet Republic also provided the Soviet leaders with supplementary evidence and new insights into some of the urgent political and economic problems in Russia. In the period of war communism and civil war the Bolsheviks faced two major challenges, the danger of weakening party control over other wielders of power in Russia (local soviets and trade unions in particular) and the breakdown of economic life (loose work discipline and the unavailability of adequate food supplies for the industrial proletariat). The Hungarian experience had proved that unless the trade unions were fully controlled by the party they would become subversive economic interest groups working at cross purposes with the political leadership, unless they were organizationally separated from the party they would become independent loci of political power, and unless they were stripped of their ideological pretensions, sooner or later they would appear with a reformist, syndicalist, or extreme leftist (as was the case in Russia) opposition platforms and claim a decisive voice in the party's councils.[20] The lessons of Hungary may well have been a decisive factor in Lenin's views toward the Russian Trade Union Opposition and the resolution on the Workers' Opposition at the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in March, 1921.

Concerning the economic problems of the first period of social-

[20] In view of Lukács' thesis equating the soviets and the party and the autonomist propensities displayed by factory workers' councils in Hungary, the same dictum was also true for Russia in the years of war communism.

ist construction, Hungary's case had demonstrated that in the early phase of the transition period higher living standards for the urban proletariat could not be provided because of the initial drop in production and the peasants' unwillingness to voluntarily surrender their grain supplies without adequate compensation. Unless close party control of economic life could be assured, industrialization and the continuity of production would be jeopardized by the trade unions and by the undernourished and insufficiently class-conscious workers themselves. Immediate monetary reforms could not be implemented successfully by the proletarian government unless the country were totally isolated from the bourgeois economics of its neighbors (the Hungarian peasants had refused to accept "white"-communist issued currency and had adhered to the old "blue" money issued under the Monarchy), but—however erroneously and belatedly it had been implemented in Hungary—the peasantry could be placated and the proletariat fed by bartering consumer goods for grain. Subsequent Russian efforts in terms of economic reorganization, centralization, and planning procedures, and the introduction of the New Economic Policy certainly seemed to indicate a keen awareness of the economic errors committed by Jenő Varga and his colleagues in Hungary.[21]

The Forgotten Lessons of 1919

There are many indications that the lessons of 1919 were incompletely perceived and never fully understood by Lenin and his successors in Russia. This was owing primarily to ideological limitations —may they be called "revolutionary optimism," "cult of personality," or mere blindness to facts—but also to traits peculiar to the Bolsheviks as "creative Marxist thinkers" in general, and to Stalin in particular.

Despite communist expectations concerning the impending breakup of the capitalist world, it remains that despite its crises in 1918 to 1924, 1929 to 1934, and after World War II, world capitalism has displayed remarkable regenerative abilities—statements and predictions by Lenin, Zinoviev, Stalin, and Khrushchev and his successors notwithstanding. This was one of the lessons of Hungary of 1919 and Germany of 1921 and 1923 that the Soviet leadership

[21] Lenin devoted a great deal of time and energy to analyzing various problems of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, particularly those concerning the role of old state bureaucracy, the use of bourgeois specialists, and the party's peasant strategy.

refused to acknowledge, and hence never learned to cope with in a fully rational manner.

The establishment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic was an excellent example of the presence, recognition, and utilization of the objective and subjective conditions for a revolution by a well-prepared communist elite. The results in Hungary, however, were subsequently ignored by Béla Kun himself during the March Action of 1921 in Germany and by Comintern emissary Mátyás Rákosi in the same year in Italy. While it would be a mistake to make sweeping generalizations from these ill-fated events, various Comintern emissaries to China in 1926 and to the Moscow-controlled communist parties in Germany in 1933, Austria in 1934, and Spain in 1936–1937 fell victim to similarly sanguine hopes concerning the revolutionary readiness of the proletariat or the peasantry in those countries and the possibility of support from abroad.

To a considerable extent this long string of defeats was due to faulty perception (at times underoptimistic, but more often over-optimistic) of the existence of these indispensable conditions for a revolution. Hence in these instances international class struggle deteriorated into "Putschism," which—especially under Stalin—became a permanent weapon in the Soviet arsenal for the promotion of world revolution. Radek's dictum after the fall of the Kun regime ("defeat strengthens character"), in fact, set a precedent for substituting vulgar psychology for a reasoned explanation for the resounding defeat of the Hungarian Soviet and its similarly ill-fated successors.

The performance of the Hungarian communists in 1919 proved that a Bolshevik type of revolutionary party, meeting all or most of Lenin's prerequisites, was a product of particular Russian traditions (authoritarianism in politics, dogmatism and orthodoxy in religion, underdevelopment in industry, and the preponderance of agriculture, etc.), and could not be formed outside Russian without gravely compromising, or at best considerably modifying, the "Leninist norms" of ideology, organization, strategy, and tactics. It was not until 1945 that Stalin learned that a faithful duplication of the Soviet pattern was not possible without the armed presence of Russia. All East European communist parties practiced "domesticism" in translating specific Russian features of the Soviet "blueprint" for the bourgeois-democratic transition period from capitalism to socialism, but the permissible limits of local innovation and initiative were embodied in the never clearly defined formula of "people's democracy," and,

as the case of Yugoslavia demonstrated, these ground rules were never meant to be more than a barely concealed direct Soviet control over another communist party. The bankruptcy of the Stalinist pattern for intra-ruling party relations was not publicly acknowledged until the Moscow Declaration of 1960, when the Soviet leaders admitted (or rather, were compelled to recognize) the feasibility of separate paths of individual communist parties.

According to Lenin, and particularly to Trotsky, the main cause for the defeat in Hungary was the absence of armed struggle preceding the communist takeover in March, 1919,[22] a view rooted in a profound distrust of the parliamentary road as a means of capturing power. Judging from the subsequent communist putsches, it was not until the popular-front strategy of the Seventh Comintern Congress that the Soviet leaders were even remotely equipped to obtain power by parliamentary means. Even then, the united-front approach never represented more than a temporary commitment to legal methods, to be abandoned for forceful means as soon as the opportunity for an undivided possession of power presented itself. It was not until the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union—under the overpowering logic of the world situation—that violent means were abandoned (or relegated to second place) in favor of the parliamentary road.

Finally, Béla Kun and his communist colleagues were held responsible for their failure to maintain the party's organizational identity and, after merging with the socialists, for not purging the united party of reformists, waverers, and "social patriotic" elements. Despite the insistence of the Russian leaders on the pragmatic necessity of maintaining an ideologically and organizationally united party even at the cost of working-class disunity (a method fully vindicated by the Bolsheviks' own history), an accomplishment feasible under Russian conditions was not automatically feasible in the realm of the international communist movement. Dogmatic insistence on the letter of the dialectic cabala "before we unite, we must split" led to fateful consequences between the two world wars: While the echoes of the Rákosi-Turatti debate at the Leghorn Congress of 1921 were still in the air, Mussolini's blackshirts were marching into Rome. While the German communists were busy denouncing the "social fascist" social democrats, Hitler's brownshirts were taking over the

[22] Leon Trotsky, *The First Five Years of the Communist International,* vol. 2, New York: Pioneer, 1945, pp. 28–29.

Prussian Diet and then Germany. While special Cheka agents were preoccupied with ferreting out alleged Trotskyists in the republican army, Franco's Falangists were storming Madrid, partly enfeebled by Stalin's "sixth column." The Soviet party never fully acknowledged the essential fallacy of "splittism" for the sake of monolithic unity, but during and after the late 1950's it was nevertheless forced to make major concessions to the Yugoslav, "national democratic," and non-ruling communist and workers' parties and lesser but equally significant compromises toward the ruling Polish, Hungarian, and Rumanian parties.

Béla Kun stated in his last published writing on the Hungarian Soviet Republic that "The party's history is an integral part of its ideology." In the light of lessons learned, forgotten, ignored, or suppressed, it seems reasonable to conclude that the ideology of a communist party is only as viable as the party's awareness of past mistakes and its willingness to bring this knowledge to bear on its current predicament.

APPENDIX A

HUNGARIAN TRADE-UNION MEMBERSHIP, 1899–1919

Year	*Membership*
1899	8,525
1900	8,222*
1901	9,999
1902	15,270
1903	41,138†
1904	53,169
1905	71,163‡
1906	129,332
1907	130,120
1908	102,054
1909	85,226
1910	86,478
1911	95,180
1912	111,966
1913	107,486
1914 (June)	96,290
1914 (December)	51,510
1915	43,381
1916	55,338
1917	215,222
1918	721,437
1919 (April–May)	1,000,000† (est.)
1919 (June)	1,420,000 (est.)

SOURCE: Except figures for 1900, 1903, and 1905, Samu Jászai, *A Magyar Szakszervezetek Története* [*History of the Hungarian Trade Unions*], Budapest: A Szakszervezeti Tanács Kiadása, 1925, p. 234.

* "Proceedings of the Second Congress of the Hungarian Trade Unions," in Tibor Erényi *et al.* (eds.), *A Magyar Munkásmozgalom Történetének Válogatott Dokumentumai*, 1900–1907 [*Selected Documents from the History of the Hungarian Workers' Movement*], vol. 3, Budapest: Szikra, 1955, p. 67.

† "Proceedings of the Tenth Congress of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party," in *ibid.*, p. 186.

‡ Zoltán Horváth, *A Magyar Századforduló. A Második Reformnemzedék Története* [*The Hungarian Turn of the Century: History of the Second Reform Generation*], Budapest: Gondolat, 1962, p. 140.

APPENDIX B

STRIKES IN HUNGARY, 1905–1913

Year	*Strikes*	*Lockouts*	*Workers participating*	*Workers winning wage raise*	*Workers winning shorter working hours*
1905	346	36	58,512	39,798	32,418
1906	652	70	60,780	79,933	65,115
1907	488	133	44,276	75,282	19,587
1908	251	71	19,414	7,415	5,333
1909	181	32	13,419	10,140	5,557
1910	162	27	20,884	26,644	16,324
1911	206	21	21,517	36,963	38,262
1912	236	22	37,085	30,802	14,003
1913	133	42	19,948	8,453	4,098

SOURCE: Samu Jászai, *A Magyar Szakszervezetek Története* [*History of the Hungarian Trade Unions*] Budapest: A Szakszervezeti Tanács Kiadása, 1925, p. 212.

APPENDIX C

CORRESPONDENCE OF THE HUNGARIAN GROUP, RUSSIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (BOLSHEVIK)

Letter of March 25, 1918, from the Hungarian Group in Moscow to the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) concerning the formation of the Hungarian Group.[1]

Dear Comrades!

We wish to inform you that we formed a Hungarian communist group on March 24. The group embraced the theoretical and practical platform of the Russian Communist Bolshevik Party. We accept its program, as prepared by the *kollegium* of the last party congress [Seventh Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), March 6–8, 1918].

Our group—with the help of the Central Committee—publishes twice a week a political and scientific newspaper, *Szociális Forradalom* [*Social Revolution*].[2] The purpose of the paper is the dissemination of communist ideas among prisoners of war in Russia and among workers and peasants in Hungary —in the interest of an armed uprising leading to a social revolution. Therefore, we plan to send the paper through illegal channels to Hungary and to America, where more than two million Hungarian workers live.

The editing [of the paper] will be entrusted to a committee of three. The group will organize courses to train agitators. Comrades thus trained will be sent to Hungary after graduation via underground routes as [our] emissaries. They must establish communist organizations there, which would maintain liaison between emigrants here and left-wing social democrats in Hungary.

[1] György Milei, "Dokumentok az OK(b)P Magyar Csoportjának Történétéből, 1918–1919 [Documents from the History of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 1, 1958, p. 168. For the background of this overture to the Soviet party, see Béla Kun, "Pamiati Tibora Samueli [Memories of Tibor Szamuely]," in Jenő Györkei and Antal Józsa eds.), *Vengerskie Internatsionalisty v Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi Sotsialisticheskoi Revolutsii* [*Hungarian Internationalists in the Great October Socialist Revolution*], Moscow: Voennizdat, 1959, p. 211.

[2] The first issue of *Szociális Forradalom* was published on April 3, 1918, in Moscow. Cf. Pál Gisztl, "Az Oroszországi Kommunista (Bolsevik) Párt Magyar Csoportja Megalakulásának 40. Évfordulójára [On the Fortieth Anniversary of the Formation of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 2, 1958, p. 183.

We request our admission to the Russian Communist Party in accordance with the rules of its Statutes.

With comradely greetings:

Béla Kun
President of the Group

Ernő Pór[3]
Secretary

Letter of April 11, 1918, from the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), to the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), acknowledging the group's formation.[4]

Esteemed Comrade!

In reply to your letter of March 25 of this year, addressed to the Central Committee, we wish to inform you that the Central Committee has no objections concerning the functioning of the Group as a part of the Russian party within the meaning of its Statutes. Plans of the Russian [Hungarian] Group for the preparation and sending of emissaries are fully approved by the Central Committee.

With comradely greetings,

[unsigned]

Letter of April 4, 1918, from the Hungarian Group to the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) concerning the Group's planned action program.[5]

Esteemed Comrades!

In reference to our conversations with Comrade Sverdlov,[6] we wish to inform you of the projected action program of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).

[3] Names of other leaders of the group, omitted here, are Tibor Szamuely, Commissar for Military Organization, and Endre Rudnyánszky, Commissar of Press and Publications. Cf. Béla Kun, "Memories of Tibor Szamuely," p. 212.

[4] György Milei, "Dokumentumok az OK(b)P Magyar Csoportjának Történetéből, 1918–1919 [Documents from the History of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 1, 1958, pp. 173–174.

[5] Text in *ibid.*

[6] On Sverdlov's meeting with the Hungarian Bolshevik leaders, see József Horváth (ed.), 133 *Nap* [133 *Days*], Budapest: Táncsics, 1959, pp. 40–41.

I

Since we have identified ourselves with the views and policies of the Russian Communist Party, it is not necessary to talk about our general revolutionary goals.

The Hungarian revolutionary movement in its present stage needs an organization such as the Bolsheviks had before the revolution. Since we are very familiar with the history of Bolshevik organizations, our purpose is to utilize their working methods.

Due to imperfections in our communications system, we cannot give precise information on our present strength. However, we count on thirty comrades trained in agitation work who can begin in a few days.

Our editorial work [at *Szociális Forradalom*] strictly adheres to the Marxist spirit, and its quality is such that we can now engage in a struggle with the Hungarian social democrats.

II *Immediate tasks and plans*

1. . . . [*Szociális Forradalom*] is informative only to a limited extent since it is to be a revolutionary paper of agitation [designed] to popularize Marxism and to criticize most sharply the policies of the Hungarian Social Democratic leadership.

In view of the revolutionary conditions in Hungary, the paper's task will be the formulation of a revolutionary tactic [to be implemented in Hungary] with particular reference to the agrarian question. We are enclosing the first issue of our newspaper.

2. Since the Hungarian Social Democratic Party has [in the past] completely neglected the dissemination of Marxist literature . . . we shall publish a series of pamphlets under the title of "Communist Library," including: A. "What Do the Communists Want?" B. Lenin, "Civil War and Revolution," C. "Imperialism and War," D. "The Revolutionary Forces of Hungary and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," E. "The Communist Manifesto," F. "The Agrarian Question."[7]

Theses of original pamphlets will be submitted to the Central Committee in each case. . . . Comrade Bukharin's cooperation has been assured.[8]

3. One of our most important tasks is the organization of courses for agitators. The first such course on the subject of "Imperialism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" has already begun.[9] Our goal is to enlarge the course

[7] Only a few of these titles were published; the rest were substituted by original pamphlets by Kun, Szamuely, József Rabinovits, and translated pamphlets from Bukharin.

[8] Bukharin, Kun's and Szamuely's ideological mentor and Rudnyánszky's bother-in-law, was assigned by the Bolshevik Central Committee to supervise the Hungarian Group's press and publication program.

[9] According to a graduate of the Moscow Agitator School, the first course started on May 14, 1918. Lajos Németi, "Küldetésben Leninnél [On Meeting Lenin]," in Borbála Szerémi (ed.), *Nagy Idők Tanui Emlékeznek* [*Heroic Times Remembered*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, p. 122.

so as to include all those suitable elements who are currently staying in different Russian towns and intend to remain [in Russia]. Some of the trained agitators will remain in Russia, especially where many Hungarian-speaking prisoners of war live, and others will go to Hungary via illegal routes.

4. We wish to unite all Hungarian communists in Russia and dispatch them to cities . . . where many prisoners of war pass through [on their way back to Hungary].

5. We wish to unite primarily those Hungarian proletarian prisoners of war who are now serving in the Red Army, particularly those who joined it from *conviction* and not merely to make a living. This is very important for the following reason: this way we may gain subjects for our agitation and also suitable agents for the sale and distribution of newspapers—for the sake of a proletarian revolution and an armed uprising in Hungary.

We wish to add that we have established ideological and tactical cooperation with the Czechoslovak communist group and will proceed similarly toward the not yet formed German and Rumanian communist groups.[10]

III *Program of activities in Hungary*

1. Smuggling of newspapers through the Ukraine, Bulgaria, or Rumania. We have a perfectly reliable and very determined comrade for this task.[11]

2. Organization and establishment of communication with the Hungarian leftist factions [of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party] (Ervin Szabó, Alpári), who in the past broke with the party in order to promote a split from within the Hungarian Social Democratic Party.[12]

3. Liaison with America. Comrade Tarczai, who had left the Hungarian Social Democratic Party some time ago and emigrated [to America] and now lives there, is working in the same direction.[13] This is of great importance because approximately two million Hungarian-speaking proletarians live in America.

4. We plan to establish contact with comrades Platten, Grimslund, and

[10] This was in reference to Alois Muna's cell of Czech left socialists, who subsequently formed the Czechoslovak Group in May, 1918. There is no evidence of any Hungarian-Rumanian communist cooperation before December, 1918.

[11] Gábor Kohn was in charge of this operation. His assignments included underground work in the Communist Party of Finland (February–March, 1918) and agitprop work behind German lines in the Ukraine (May–October, 1918).

[12] There is no evidence that either Ervin Szabó or Gyula Alpári were approached by Kun's agents before November, 1918, although Kun claimed to have received a letter from a revolutionary socialist group in Budapest during the summer of 1918.

[13] Lajos Tarczai belonged to the "Karl Marx Society," a short-lived socialist opposition group in 1908. In 1910 he resigned from the party executive and emigrated to the United States. In New York he wrote for *Elõre* [*Forward*], a Hungarian-language socialist weekly. There is no evidence that he was, in fact, contacted from Moscow.

Pannekoek and through them attempt to smuggle our newspapers [to Hungary].

5. Revolutionary propaganda in the Austro-Hungarian army through the distribution of the newspaper and, with the help of our comrades, through the creation of soldiers' organizations.[14]

IV

At the present we have the following financial means at our disposal:

1. Party dues, but the amount is not worth mentioning.

2. Money from subscriptions and sales of the newspaper, but this is not dependable due to the increased costs of shipping.[15] From this money we would like to assure the livelihood of those comrades who are in charge of agitation in groups yet to be formed in cities and towns.

3. From the Central Executive Committee, through Comrade Ivan Ulianov,[16] we are receiving 1,200 (twelve hundred) rubles per month for the newspaper's office expenses; four hundred rubles per month per person for the salaries of five comrades in charge of editing, distribution, and organizational matters.

Our request to the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) is as follows:

1. Cost of pamphlets listed under II. We request that the Central Committee's financial grants earmarked for our Group be transmitted through the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).[17]

2. Per diem payments for traveling agitators.

3. Payment of expenses incurred by [our] emissaries. It would be most useful to have a Russian comrade accompany our emissary through the Ukraine to the border of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As for Stockholm, at this time we request that the [Russian] party's representative be notified of the existence of our Group. Concerning America, we shall return to the matter.[18] We also request letters of introduction to Bolshevik organizations in Kiev and in the Ukraine.

[14]The first soldiers' councils in the Monarchy's army were formed secretly in the Pécs (Hungary) garrison in August, 1918. Whether this was a Moscow-inspired development or the work of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party organizers drafted after the general strikes is still uncertain.

[15]*Szociális Forradalom,* as a rule, was handed out to prisoners of war free of charge.

[16]Ivan Ulianov was the head of the All-Russian Bureau for Prisoners of War in Russia.

[17]From the memoir literature it appears that the Hungarian Group was constantly in arrears for its printing and newsprint bills. Kun held the Central Executive Committee's bureaucracy responsible for this.

[18]Apparently in the summer of 1918 Kun and Szamuely temporarily gave up the plan of organizing a social revolution in America with the help of Hungarian immigrants.

V

Due to the widespread and increasingly worsening abuses [perpetrated allegedly in the name of the Group], we request written recognition of our Group from the Russian Communist Party.[19] We also need letters of introduction for our agitators.

VI

Finally, we wish to indicate our views concerning the organizations of prisoners of war.

Organizations calling themselves "internationalist" or "Social Democratic" indiscriminately accept everybody for membership. . . . In some places . . . a prisoner of war must join the organization (a trade union, as it were) or lose his job.[20] Such organizations are concerned with the economic problems of prisoners of war and are helping the local Soviet authorities to implement government orders concerning prisoners of war. . . .

We feel compelled to state that we cannot assume any responsibility for the work and the activities of these [internationalist] groups. We—who know the situation quite well—are not about to be misled by resolutions [issued by such groups], since we know that anybody (including counterrevolutionaries) can find shelter in these "internationalist" groups.[21] We do not consider these organizations—which at best may become germs of a broadly based workers' association—useful for our goals. . . . Instead, we hold that the only correct form is that of the prerevolution Bolshevik cells. Our members will, of course, take part in prisoner-of-war affairs, but the Group as such will not join them,

[19]At that time there were many bogus local "internationalist communist parties" established by enterprising Hungarian, Czech, Latvian, and Rumanian groups throughout Russia. On the other hand, several bona fide local internationalist "parties" were formed in southern Russia, Turkestan, and particularly in Siberia. By the fall of 1918 all such legitimate groups—with the sole exception of the isolated Communist Party of Foreign Workers and Peasants in Turkestan—were incorporated as local branches of the Federation of Foreign Groups. Cf. I. S. Sologubov, *Inostrannye Kommunisty v Turkestane,* 1918–1921 [*Foreign Communists in Turkestan*], Tashkent: Goz Izd. Uzbeksov S.S.S.R., 1961, and András Zsilák, "A Külföldi Munkások és Földmivesek Kommunista Pártja a Turkesztáni Szövetséges Tanácsköztársaság Területén, 1918–1919 [The Communist Party of Foreign Workers and Peasants in the Territory of the Turkestan Soviet Republic]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 3, 1962.

[20]This seemed to be the situation in Kazan, for example. There were two such organizations in the city, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee of Foreign Workers and Peasants and the Kazan Section of Austrian-Hungarian Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. Travel and work permits and applications for Russian citizenship were to be approved by one of these two groups. Cf. N. Subaev, "Az OK(b)P Kazán Kormányzóság Mellett Működő Külföldi Kommunista Csoport Tevékenysége 1918–1919" [On the Activities of Foreign Communists in the Kazan Provincial Organization of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* no. 2, 1959, pp. 211–215.

[21]For example, the Kazan groups solemnly submitted the name of one Zhebrovski from the *gubkom* to Moscow to be considered as ambassador to Austria-Hungary and Germany. *Ibid.,* p. 216.

may they be called not "Social Democratic Internationalist," but even "Communist Internationalist!"

With comradely greetings,
Béla Kun, President
Ernő Pór, Secretary

Hungarian Communist Group
(In Hungarian and Russian)

Report of Sept. 4, 1918, from the Hungarian Group to the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), on the activities of the group during August, 1918.[22]

. . . In view of the critical military situation, the Hungarian Group, like all Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) organizations, mobilized one-fifth of its membership regardless of the number already at the fronts. . . .

We are sending eight to nine men, that is, one-fifth of our [Moscow] membership of forty-five, to the front. . . .

So far we have dispatched two units . . . the first, which we organized in cooperation with the other Groups of the Federation [of Foreign Groups], is fighting in the Urals. . . . The second similarly organized unit has left for the Kazan front and is currently fighting the Czechoslovaks.

The third unit is ready and will leave for the Ekaterinburg front where Comrade Béla Kun, Chairman of the Hungarian Group, is awaiting it. We have dispatched Comrade Tibor Szamuely, member of our Group,[23] to negotiate with the Supreme Military Council in accordance with a previous agreement with Comrade Trotsky. . . .

Another unit to be sent to Perm will be accompanied by the graduates of a recently concluded course for Hungarian agitators, who will serve as commanders and agitators. . . . The third course for agitators will end in about one week. The course has thirty-four students.[24] Of these, we plan to send seven

[22] Text in György Milei, "Documents . . . ," pp. 173–176; for similar reports by foreign groups see G. B. Shumenko, *Boevoe Sodruzhestvo Trudiashchiksia Zarubezhnykh Stran Narodami Sovetskoi Rossii,* 1917–1922 [*Militant Solidarity of Foreign Workers with the Peoples of Soviet Russia*], Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossia, 1957. For summary reports by each group for 1918 prepared for the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) in March, 1919, see E. Iaroslavski (ed.), *Vos'moi S"ezd RKP(b)* [*The Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)*], Moscow: Partizdat, 1933, pp. 434–439. See also "Federation of Foreign Groups, Central Committee, Russia Communist Party (Bolshevik)" in Appendix to V. I. Lenin, *Sochineniia* [*Collected Works*], 3rd ed., vol. 24, Moscow: Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, 1931, pp. 753–754.

[23] Szamuely was political commissar of the First Moscow Internationalist Battalion between April and October, 1918.

[24] Sixty-one propagandists graduated from the first three six-week courses of the Hungarian Agitator School in Moscow. There were sixteen students in the fourth course, which began in the middle of September, 1918. The fifth was scheduled to start on October 25.

back to Hungary for agitation work among the soldiers and proletarian masses. Twelve will go to the fronts, five will be agitators in different Russian towns, ten will be dispatched with miscellaneous party assignments. The fourth course for agitators is scheduled to begin on September 15. Of the graduates of the first and second courses for agitators, nine are with different internationalist units at the front, twelve are in Russia (Petrograd, Moscow, Viatka, Saratov, Briansk, Orel, Kursk, Viazma, Vitebsk, Voronezh, Tambov, and Riazan), nine are in the Ukraine. . . .

The *Szociális Forradalom* is published twice a week in 17,000 to 18,000 copies. Most of the copies go to the fighting units, although we endeavor to send as many as possible to Hungary as well. Last month we also published N. Bukharin's "Program of the Communists" in 20,000 copies. . . .

Every member of the [Moscow] Group—students of the Kremlin agitator school included—are in the state of constant military readiness under the authority of the Kremlin's commander.[25]

For the Chairman,

E[*ndre*] *Rudnyánszky*
Károly Vántus, Secretary

[25] Since June, 1918, when Szamuely and thirty students from the Agitator School distinguished themselves in recapturing the main post office building of Moscow during the left social revolutionary uprising.

APPENDIX D

FOR A LENINIST HUNGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

Excerpts from a speech delivered Oct. 25, 1918, by Béla Kun at the Conference of the Hungarian Group held in Moscow.[1]

We communist Bolsheviks who for decades have been fighting for the liberation of the proletariat, and also those who as young men here in Russia learned the way of emancipating the working class, most decisively forever broke with the social democracy, for it is today the party . . . of the counter-revolution. . . .

Consequently, the question of forming a communist party arises. I am not led by any kind of revolutionary fervor. I do not believe that tomorrow we shall have the power in our hands, but I do believe that the proletariat of Hungary will acquire that power.

We must be prepared . . . for the work of the revolution, armed uprisings, the time for which has arrived. Therefore, it is our duty to form the Communist Party of Hungary. This should be a territorial organization, embracing all nationalities of Hungary. Naturally, [the party's] organizational principle must be the same as those of the Russian Communist Party, not only because we are its children . . . but also because the Russian dictatorship of the proletariat is the cornerstone of the new revolutionary International. The Russian Communist Party today is a unified, strictly disciplined party—the type we need ourselves.

Excerpts from a speech delivered on Nov. 4, 1918, by Béla Kun at the Enlarged Conference of the Hungarian Group held in Moscow.[2]

Our demands cannot be satisfied even by a system of a most radical [bourgeois] democracy. . . . We demand not partial concessions of the bourgeoisie, but the political power in its totality, the only road to the liberation of the proletariat. . . . The world revolution is in the making everywhere. The greatest obstacles of this revolution are the official social democratic parties who voluntarily decline to take power, as the Mensheviks did in Russia. . . . The question is this: Will it be possible to form our party, the Communist Party of Hungary, in opposition to the Social Democratic Party? One might say we are but few—but then, ask any Bolshevik how many they were when the February revolution broke out . . . and how were they received at that time? Our situation is much more favorable because now we can rely on [a system of]

[1] "Minutes of the Hungarian Communist Group's Conferences of Oct. 25 and Nov. 4, 1918," *Társadalmi Szemle,* no. 11, 1958, pp. 92–93.

[2] *Ibid.,* pp. 93–94.

the dictatorship of the proletariat which follows us with parental love and solidarity, of which we have enjoyed much thus far. . . .

Of course there has been a socialist movement in Hungary, except that there has not been anyone to lead it and . . . it [lacked leaders] who could have shown the Hungarian proletariat the road to liberation. Regardless of how few we are, we shall transmit our ideas . . . and either legally or illegally we shall assume the leadership of the [workers'] movement . . . and lead it to victory. . . .

We are going home and all of us, regardless of the language we speak, will meet at home not under the present bourgeois rule, but when communism (Bolshevism) will reign, not only in Hungary but in Austria, Germany, and everywhere in the West. For the sake of accomplishing this task, I submit and ask the acceptance of this draft resolution:

> The Conference of communists from the territory of the former Hungarian State, held in the Hotel Dresden, Moscow, on Nov. 4, 1918, hereby resolves to reaffirm the declaration of principles issued by the conference of Oct. 25, 1918, and to form the Hungarian Organization of the International Communist Party, henceforth called the Communist Party of Hungary.
>
> The Party adopts those Statutes of the Russian Communist Party as its Statutes. The Conference further resolves that until the Third International of the working class, the International Soviet Republic, is built, it recognizes the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) as the international representative of the working class and submits itself to the general political line of its resolutions and decisions.
>
> The Conference directs every Hungarian member of the Russian Communist Party to leave the territory of the Russian Soviet Republic and put themselves at the disposal of the cause of the international social revolution in Hungary. . . .

Report of the Hungarian Group to the Central Committee, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), on its activities during the month of November, 1918.[3]

In view of the revolutionary events in Hungary, the conference of communists from the former territories of Hungary founded the Communist Party of Hungary and decided to send every outstanding agitator to Hungary.[4] Ac-

[3]Text in György Milei, "Dokumentumok az OK(b)P Magyar Csoportjának Történetéből [Documents from the History of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)]," *Párttörténelmi Közlemények,* vol. 3, no. 1, 1958, pp. 173–174. Cf. "Report on the Activities of the Federation of Foreign Groups: Report of the Hungarian Group," in Iaroslavsky (ed.), *Vosmoi S"ezd RKP(b)* [*The Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)*], Moscow: Partizdat, 1933, 437–438.

[4]For excerpts from the resolution of the Oct. 25 and Nov. 4, 1918, Moscow conferences of "Communists of Different Nationalities from Hungary," see Béla Kun, *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaságról* [*On the Hungarian Soviet Republic*], Budapest: Kossuth, 1959, pp. 132–136.

cording to the resolution, beginning in November, agitators will be sent to Hungary under the guidance of the new Foreign Bureau of the Communist Party of Hungary. In this work the Foreign Bureau will cooperate with the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), and the Federation [of Foreign Groups]. We have dispatched eighty agitators [to Hungary] at the end of November, including every member of the Presidium of the Hungarian Group, to wit: Kun, Krammer, K. Vántus, F. Münnich, A. Feczkó, F. Jancsik, F. Karikás, Gy. Nánási, J. Rabinovics, G. Kohn, etc.[5]

Most of these comrades went to Budapest. In addition to these agitators, we also sent about 100 to 120 persons to Hungary who have helped us here—and have served as footsoldiers of the party, as it were.[6]

Between November 10 and 20 we held a conference of Hungarian communists in the Moscow International Hospital (17 Voznesenskaia). Representatives of local party organizations from all parts of Russia took part in the conference's work. The conference was informative in character (that is, not empowered to make decisions). The participants approved the resolutions of the November 4 conference without debate . . . and most of the 45 delegates immediately left for Hungary to carry on agitation. . . . [7]

During the last month we also published several pamphlets, posters, and other types of popular literature. . . .[8]

E.[*ndre*] *Rudnyánszky*
President, Hungarian Group

[5] This list includes only the names of those who documentably reappeared during the period of November, 1918–August, 1919, in Hungary as communist functionaries.

[6] Many of these "footsoldiers" immediately defected from the communist cause after their arrival in Hungary.

[7] No more information is available on this ten-day conference, which was apparently concerned with the organization of Hungarian internationalist units for the Russian Red Army.

[8] According to contemporary official reports of various Hungarian intelligence agencies, some of this literature designed for Hungarian internal consumption—such as Kun's pamphlets—was made to appear as if it had been printed in Leipzig in order to pass police inspection.

APPENDIX E

BÉLA KUN'S RETURN FROM RUSSIA AND FIRST DAYS IN BUDAPEST

Kun arrived in Budapest on Nov. 17, 1918. In a hotel room rented under an assumed name he first read all wartime issues of Szocializmus, *the Hungarian Social Democratic Party's theoretical monthly. He then contacted Ernő Seidler, his former confidant from the Tomsk camp, who related to him the events the last two weeks, including the attempts of the socialist opposition to form a separate group of left socialists to safeguard the achievements of the revolution against the "majority opportunists" of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. Kun then sent for Béla Vágó, Jenő László, and Béla Szántó, leaders of the "old socialist opposition":*[1]

On the morning of the 18th, Vágó came to my hotel. . . . Although I protested the idea of launching a movement from a coffee house . . . Vágó took me to the Seeman coffee house, where László had his headquarters. Vágó and László informed me of the details of the [Hungarian] October revolution . . . and also of the behavior of several individuals and who belonged to which faction, who had joined the social chauvinists, and who had joined revolutionary pacifist formations during the war. They told me about an "independent socialist" group which had already issued some sort of manifesto.

It turned out that the Vágó-László-Szántó group had contacts with Ottó Korvin's revolutionary syndicalist pacifist group. Korvin, in turn, had contacts with most major factories and plants. . . . They also said something about the Hevesi-Komját group [the Interfactory Committee and the revolutionary technocrats], which was about to issue [a journal called] *Internationale*. . . .

László then ran around the city asking each faction not to do anything premature, until we could decide on the matter of forming a communist party. . . .

As things stood . . . László, Vágó, later Korvin and Szántó, were of the opinion that the time was not ripe to form a separate [socialist] party. I was for an immediate concentration of all revolutionary elements in a communist party. By evening Vágó was nearly convinced . . . so was Rudas . . . but the rest still hesitated.

At midnight I left for Vienna and carried Lenin's message to Friedrich Adler [elsewhere Kun related that his mission was unsuccessful due to the "cowardice and ignorance" of Adler and Renner]. . . . I returned to Budapest

[1] Béla Kun, "Összehivjuk az Alakuló Ülést [Calling the First Communist Meeting in Hungary]" (article on the formation of the Communist Party of Hungary, written for the wall newspaper of the Moscow Hungarian Workers' Club in 1926), *Társadalmi Szemle,* no. 11, 1958, pp. 96–98.

on the 19th with a bundle of books . . . and on the following day we began round-the-clock negotiations concerning the formation of a [communist] party.

Despite my misgivings about coffee houses—being afraid of launching a Hungarian Social Democratic Party type of debating-society opposition movement—we were forced to conduct our business in László's and Vágó's favorite spot. . . . In the meantime, we prevented the independent socialists from forming a party of their own, which they had been plotting in the Royal coffee house.

We also established contacts with recently returned graduates of the Moscow party school. I talked with twenty to thirty men each day, trying to convince them one by one that the party's existence was an absolute condition of the further development of the revolution, hence, the dictatorship of the proletariat. . . .

Everybody immediately understood that the movement must be based on the factories. These were wonderful days of negotiations . . . except that it was very difficult to convince the majority of the necessity of a [separate] party. Some older comrades were of the opinion . . . that the Social Democratic Party could be conquered from within. Others argued that the party should not be founded because of the trade unions. The younger, less experienced elements . . . showed strong syndicalist leanings and generally had great difficulties understanding the need for a party.

I tried to persuade each individual in an indirect way. Since all were for publishing a newspaper ([which we wanted to name] *Vörös Ujság* [*Red Gazette*], after the Hungarian communist newspaper in Kharkov), I asked: But who should sponsor it? We cannot call it an organ of the Ervin Szabó Circle . . . I argued.

There was still a great deal of hesitation when we decided to call a meeting on the 24th [of November] to discuss the matter. Invitation of selected comrades to the conference was determined by Szántó, Vágó, László, Korvin, and myself.

APPENDIX F

ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF HUNGARY, Nov. 4, 1918 to March 21, 1919

TEMPORARY CENTRAL COMMITTEE[1]

Members Béla Kun, Károly Vántus, Ernő Pór, Hariton Peszkarid,* Emil Bozdogh,* Mátyás Kovács,* Mátyás Krisják,* Ferenc Drobnik,* Iván Matuzovits*[2]

FOREIGN BUREAU[3]

Chairman Endre Rudnyánszky

Members Béla Jaross, Pál Gisztl, Arnold Mandl, Mihák Guju, Alexei Genegario, Lázár Vukitenich

CENTRAL COMMITTEE[4]

Members Béla Kun, Béla Szántó, Béla Vágó, József Rabinovits, Jenő László Ede Chlepkó, János Hirossik, Ottó Korvin, Rezső Fiedler, László Rudas, József Mikulik, Ernő Seidler, Károly Vántus, Rezső Szaton, Ernő Pór, György Nánássy,[5] Tibor Szamuely,[6] Dezső Somló, Gyula Hevesi[7]

Chairman Béla Kun

Secretariat János Hirossik, Károly Vántus, József Rabinovits, Dezső Somló, Béla Szántó[8]

[1] Functioned between Nov. 4–24, 1918.

[2] Of the individuals denoted by an asterisk, only Matuzovits reappeared during the Hungarian Soviet Republic as the leader of the Yugoslav faction of the Hungarian Socialist Party.

[3] Elected by the Enlarged Conference of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), at the Hotel Dresden, Moscow, on Nov. 4, 1918. Functioned from Nov. 4, 1918, to July, 1920, as a part of the Hungarian Group, Federation of Foreign Groups, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).

[4] Elected Nov. 24, 1918, in Budapest.

[5] Expelled from the party on or about Feb. 26, 1919.

[6] Drafted to the central committee on or about Jan. 3, 1919.

[7] Drafted to the central committee on Dec. 15, 1918.

[8] The last three were elected to the secretariat between early December, 1918, and late January, 1919.

Editorial board, Vörös Ujság[9] Béla Kun, Jenő László, László Rudas, Tibor Szamuely, József Lengyel, Pál Hajdu, László Boros

Editorial board, Internationale[10] Gyula Hevesi, József Révai, József Kelen, Aladár Komjáti, László Rudas, Ervin Sinkó

Staff, Central Agitator School (Budapest) László Rudas, György Lukács, Sándor Varjas, Béla Fogarasi, Károly Vántus

COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE, NOV. 24, 1918, TO FEB. 21, 1919

Finance committee Béla Kun, Ernő Seidler

Party attorney Jenő László

Communist faction, Budapest Workers' Council Béla Vágó (head), Rezső Szaton, Ármin Helfgott, István Bierman, József Kelen, D. Lustig, János Schurek, Károly Bartell

Committee for soldiers' councils, veterans' associations, and the Budapest police Béla Kun, Sándor Krammer,* György Nánássy,* Béla Szántó, Ferenc Münnich,* Árpád Korvini,* János Hirossik,* Fülöp Engländer, Árpád Feczkó, Ferenc Jancsik, József Rabinovits,* Rezső Szántó, József Cserny,* Mihály Csuvara*

Agitprop committee for the greater Budapest area Pál Hajdu, Albert Lantos, Ignácz Mauthner, István Patóczai, Fülöp Engländer, László Pamlai, Ferenc Bernhardt, Emil Langer, Ferenc Antoni, Béla Lőwy, László Grósz, Adolf Grünfeld

Technical section for the distribution of Vörös Ujság and party literature Ottó Korvin (head) and 200 operatives (20 per city district)

Committee for student and working youth groups János Lékai, György Lukács, József Lengyel, Sándor Krammer, Zoltán Rudas, Gyula Hevesi, József Révai, Béla Fogarasi, Ervin Sinkó, J. Kázmér, J. Jakab; publication *Ifjú Proletár*,[11] János Lékai editor

Agitator school for youth propagandists József Révai (head), László Boros, Zoltán Rudas

9 Communist Party of Hungary weekly, later daily newspaper. First published on Dec. 7, 1918.

10 Launched in December, 1918, by a group of anarchists and technocrats. With its fifth issue (Jan. 24, 1919) the journal was taken over by the Communist Party of Hungary as its theoretical biweekly.

11 First published on Jan. 5, 1919, by the communist faction of the National Association of Working Youth.

Heads of communist factions in trade unions

Typographers: Sándor Kellner, Artúr Illés

"Organizing committee for metal workers": Ferenc Jancsik, Rezső Fiedler, Rezsö Szaton, Frigyes Karikás, Ede Chlepko

Postal workers: Pál Robicsek

Miners (northern districts): László Rudas, Rezső Szaton, Mátyás Rákosi

Budapest railroad repair shops: Rudolf Fazekas

Teachers: Mária Krammer (Mrs. Béla Szántó), Gyula Lengyel

Association of white-collar workers and engineers: Gyula Hevesi, József Kelen, Ármin Helfgott

Municipal employees' association: Ottó Korvin

Rural department György Nyisztor (in the Association of Agrarian Laborers), László Boros, Ákos Hevesi [?]; publication *Szegény Ember,*[12] László Boros editor

Liaison with factory and plant workers' councils in the Greater Budapest area

Mátyásföld and Aszód Aircraft Works: József Mikulik, Antal Mosolygó

Lipták Works: Ede Chlepkó, Rezső Fiedler, Aladár Hikádé, Antal Kaiser, J. Hiser

Teudloff and Dietrich Works: J. Jakab, Sándor Kajári

Manfred Weiss Works, Ammunition Plant, and Steel Mills: Sándor Öszteicher, Ferenc Suller, József Chlepkó, Ferenc Bajáki, Árpád Mészáros, Ferenc Stranszki

Schlick-Nicholson Works: Béla Matisán

State Iron and Locomotive Works: Ferenc Zavadi, Ferenc Magyar, Ferenc Kötél

United Incandescent Works: Gyula Hevesi, Ármin Helfgott

Budapest Municipal Transit System: József Kelen

Organizers of communist factions in Budapest district Social Democratic Party organizations

First district: ?

Second district: Béla Vágó, Erzsébet Sipos, Béla Szántó

Third district:[13]?

Fourth district: ?

Fifth district: Mátyás Rákosi

Sixth District: Dezső Szilágyi (chairman), V. Fülöp, A. Winkler, J. Riskó, József Révai

Seventh district: Elected Dec. 26, 1918: Szilágyi (chairman), Gyula Mayerhoffer, János Matusán, Rezső Blasovszky, Ignác Perl; replaced January, 1919, by Sándor Kellner (chairman), István Bierman (deputy chairman), Andor Kellner, Rózsi Csillag, Zoltán Szántó, J. Steiner, Gábor Károly, S. Havas

Eighth district: A. Német, József Mikulik, Artúr Illés, Dezső Somló

Ninth district: József Rabinovits

[12] First published on Feb. 13, 1919, as a weekly.

[13] Communist faction established Jan. 17, 1919. *Vörös Ujság,* Jan. 18, 1919.

Tenth district:[14]

Organizers of industrial suburbs of Budapest

Rákoskeresztur: B. Kradek, György Kálmán, Sándor Vörös
Rákospalota: Lipót Hochfelder

Organizers of major provincial cities and towns

Szeged: Mátyás Rákosi, Dezső Somló, János Udvardi
Miskolc: György Szamuely, Zoltán Szamuely, Mátyás Rákosi
Pecs: Gyula Hajdú
Nagyvárad: Károly Jancsó, Lipót Katz, Jenő Katz
Bekescsaba: Dezsö Somló
Pozsony: Gábor Mészáros, Jenő László, Anton Janousek
Nyiregyhaza: Tibor Szamuely, László Szamuely, György Szamuely, Zoltán Szamuely
Debrecen: M. Miklós, V. Fülöp, János Hajdú

Nationality sections

Rumanian:[15] Enrik Kagan (chairman); publication *Steagul Rosu*[16]

Southern Slav:[17] Ivan Matuzovitch (chairman), Sava Mirkovitch (secretary)

German-speaking Communist Workers[18]

[14] Communist faction established Jan. 17, 1919. *Ibid.*

[15] Established on Jan. 3, 1919 (*Vörös Ujság,* Jan. 4, 1919), as the League of Rumanian Communists in Hungary, Banat, Transylvania, Rumania, and Austria.

[16] First published on Jan. 1, 1919.

[17] Formed prior to Jan. 15, 1919.

[18] Formed prior to Feb. 13, 1919.

* Asterisk indicates members of committee in charge of arms acquisition.

APPENDIX G

SECOND CENTRAL COMMITTEE, COMMUNIST PARTY OF HUNGARY

The second central committee was in operation from Feb. 24, 1919, to March 21, 1919, replacing the first central committee during its detainment.

Chairman Tibor Szamuely

Members Tibor Szamuely, Ernő Bettelheim, Aladár Illés, Ferenc Rákos, Elek Bolgár, Aladár Hikádé, György Lukács, Béla Székely, Rudolf Fazekas, A. Herskovits

Commission for factory groups Gyula Hevesi

Commission for press and publications Ferenc Rákos (head), Ernő Bettelheim

Commission for soldiers' soviets and the People's Guard Ernő Bettelheim (head), Béla Székely

Commission for party organization Gyula Hevesi (head), Aladár Illés

Editorial board, Vörös Ujság Ferenc Rákos (head), Gyula Alpári, Ernő Bettelheim, József Révai, Elek Bolgár

APPENDIX H

THE DOCUMENTS OF UNITY

Text of the agreement concluded in the Budapest City Prison on March 21, 1919.[1]

The Hungarian Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Hungary held a joint meeting of the Executive Committees and resolved the complete merger of the two parties.

The united party's name, pending the revolutionary International's decision on the party's final name, shall be the "Hungarian Socialist Party."

According to the stipulations of the merger, the two parties will jointly participate in the leadership of the new party and the government. The party, in the name of the proletariat, immediately assumes complete authority. The dictatorship of the proletariat will be exercised by the councils of workers, peasants, and soldiers. As a result, the projected elections for a national assembly are cancelled herewith.

The class army of the proletariat must be created immediately in order to completely disarm the bourgeoisie.

In order to ensure the complete authority of the proletariat and to [make a stand against] Entente imperialism, the fullest and closest military and spiritual alliance must be concluded with the Russian Soviet government.

Hungarian Social Democratic Party
Communist Party of Hungary

[1] Jakab Weltner (ed.), *Az Egység Okmányai* [*The Documents of Unity*], Budapest: Közoktatási Népbiztosság Kiadása, 1919, pp. 5–6.

APPENDIX I

PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS AND HANDBILLS PUBLISHED BY THE PEOPLE'S COMMISSARIAT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION, March 21 to Aug. 2, 1919

Total number of items published: 680
Average number of copies per item: 500–50,000

Subject matter of leaflet	*Number of items on subject**
Foreign propaganda and the nationality question	245
National defense and the Hungarian Red Army	166
Art, literature, press, theater, music, movies	78
Agriculture, socialization of land, collective farms	74
Dictatorship of the proletariat and the Hungarian Soviet Republic	54
Internal enemies, counterrevolution	46
Belles lettres, poems, etc.	27
Working youth movement, labor laws	27
Education and culture	27
Women	26
The Communist International	26
Local soviets and soviet elections	23
Nationalistic movements and antichauvinism	21
Antialcoholism	17
Decrees and laws	14
Food supplies and black marketeers	14
Government organizations: functions and jurisdiction	12
Economic questions and finances	12
Mass meetings and demonstrations (announcements)	12
The Socialist-Communist Party of Hungary	11
Industry, production, commerce, transportation	11
Religion, anticlericalism	11
Trade unions and "free associations"	10
May Day (1919)	10
Public health	8
Welfare	6
Constitution of the Hungarian Soviet Republic	4
Housing	2
Child welfare	2

SOURCE: *A Magyar Tanácsköztársaság Röplapjai* [*Leaflets of the Hungarian Soviet Republic*] Budapest: A Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár és az Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Közös Kiadványa, 1959.

*Allowance is made for leaflets with overlapping subject matter; hence the difference between 680 items published and the total of 1002 items in the table.

APPENDIX J

BIOGRAPHICAL DIRECTORY OF LEADING FIGURES OF THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC OF 1919

GYULA ALPÁRI (1882–1944) Expelled from a rabbinical school in 1900 for carrying on Marxist propaganda. Joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in 1901, and later joined *Népszava* as "cultural correspondent." Arrested in 1903. Joined the socialist opposition in 1905. Editor of *Ifjú Proletár* and delegate to the 1907 Stuttgart Congress of the Second International. Active in the German Social Democratic Party, 1907–1908. Leader of the socialist opposition, 1909–1913. Retired from socialist politics; joined a bourgeois daily, 1913–1914. Drafted into the army and served twenty months before receiving a medical discharge. Joined the Communist Party of Hungary in February, 1919; member of the second central committee.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs (in charge of propaganda abroad). From 1919 to 1921 lived in Czechoslovakia; delegate of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia to the Third Comintern Congress. Appointed to edit *Inprekorr* in 1922; served for eighteen years in this capacity. Member of the Politburo, and later the Committee Abroad, Communist Party of Hungary, 1925–193(?). Arrested in Paris in 1939; died in a concentration camp in 1944.

FERENC BAJÁKI (1883–1938) Locksmith, left-wing leader of the radical Metal Workers' Union.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar for Social Production; later was chairman of the Council for National Economy. Was arrested in August, 1919, tried in 1920 and given life sentence, exchanged to the Soviet Union in 1922. Until death was active in the Moscow Hungarian Workers' Club.

ISTVÁN BIERMAN (1891–1937) Active in the White Collar Workers' Union. Charter member of the Communist Party of Hungary. Member of the communist faction of the Budapest Workers' Council, Dec. 13, 1918–Jan. 28, 1919. Deputy chairman of the Budapest Seventh district Communist Party organization.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Member of the presidium of the Budapest Workers' Council. Left for the Soviet Union; worked in "leading economic position." In the late 1920s was director of the Dnepropetrovsk Power Works and member of the central committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine.

IGNÁC BOGÁR (1876–1933) Head of the Printers' and Typesetters' Union. First negotiator with the imprisoned communists in late February and early March, 1919.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Member of the presidium of the Budapest Workers' Council. Left for the Soviet Union. Director of the International Agrarian Institute in Moscow, 192(?)–1933.

VILMOS BÖHM (1880–1949) Secretary of the Metal Workers' Union. Member of the central executive committee of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, 1904(?)–1919.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar for Socialization, People's Commissar for Defense. Hungarian representative in Vienna, June 24–Aug. 1, 1919. In exile (Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Sweden), 1919–1945. Member of the central committee of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party and Hungarian ambassador to Sweden, 1946(?)–1948.

DEZSŐ BOKÁNYI (1871–1940) Chairman of the Stonemasons' and Building Workers' Union. Member of the central executive committee of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, 1894–1919; celebrated official orator of the party.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar for Labor and Welfare; member of the presidium of the Budapest Workers' Council; commander of the third division of the Hungarian Red Army. Was arrested in 1919, tried in 1920, and sentenced to death; was exchanged to the Soviet Union in 1922. Worked in welfare work and social-security administration. In the 1930s also served as Hungarian-language announcer for Radio Moscow.

ELEK BOLGÁR (1883–1955) Active in radical student movements, 1903–1907. Spent two years in New York as a journalist. In Budapest, lectured on philosophy and sociology. Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the second central committee.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Hungarian representative in Austria and deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs; director of the Research Institute on Historical Materialism.

Worked in the communist parties of Austria and Germany, 1920–1935. After 1935 lived in the Soviet Union and during the war held high rank in the Red Army. Member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1945. Also served as ambassador in several foreign countries.

ERNŐ BETTELHEIM (1889–1959) Member of the socialist left opposition. In late 1918 was secretary in the Zemplén county organization of the Communist Party of Hungary and a member of the second central committee.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: In May, 1919, was dispatched to Austria to engineer a revolution in Vienna. Fled from Vienna after the "Putsch of June 14" failed.

Lived in Germany and France, 1920–192(?). In the Soviet Union, worked at the Comintern, Profintern, and "other Soviet organizations," 1927. In Hungary was director of the party publishing house (Szikra), 1945–1959.

EDE CHLEPKÓ (1883–1937) Metal worker, chief shop steward in Teudloff-Dietrich Works (Budapest). Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the central committee.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Political commissar of the Budapest Red Guard. First in Austria, then in the Soviet Union, active in Hungarian Communist Party affairs, 1919.

BÉLA FOGARASI (1891–1959) Socialist intellectual, early member of the Communist Party of Hungary.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Head of the university department of the People's Commissariat for Public Education.

Active in the communist parties of Austria, Germany, and the Soviet Union, 1919–1945. Taught at the Institute of Red Professors, active in the Institute of Philosophy of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. In 1945 was the leading Stalinist ideologue and head of the party academy. Editor of the Hungarian Communist Party theoretical monthly, *Társadalmi Szemle,* 1946–1953. Member of the central committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, 1956–1959.

SÁNDOR GARBAI (1879–1947) President of the Construction and Building Workers' Union, member of the central executive committee of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party, 1903–1919. Chairman of the State Committee for Housing Construction in the Károlyi government.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Chairman of the Revolutionary Governing Council and central executive committee. Chairman of the Council of National Economy, June 21–Aug. 1, 1919. In exile in Czechoslovakia after 1919.

JENŐ HAMBURGER (1883–1936) Physician, anarchosyndicalist secretary of Nagykanizsa city Hungarian Social Democratic Party organization. Arrested and tried after the January, 1918, strikes. Elected to the central executive committee of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party as secretary, November, 1918. In early 1919 organized land seizures in Transdanubia.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar for Agriculture; division commander of the Hungarian Red Army. Leader of the agrarian extremist group in the government.

Prominent member of the Kun faction in Vienna, 1919–1921. After 1922: first department head and later deputy director at the Institute of Radiology, Moscow.

GYULA HEVESI (1890–) Engineer, leader of the antimilitarist "revolutionary technocrats." Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the second central committee.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar for Social Production.

In the Soviet Union, manager of several major industrial enterprises and trusts, 1920–1945. Director of the Hungarian State Patent Office, 1948. Secretary of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1950. Member of the central committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, 1959.

JÁNOS HIROSSIK Construction worker, socialist journalist, member of the "old socialist opposition." Founding member and secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party of Hungary.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Member of the secretariat of the Socialist-Communist Party of Hungary. People's Commissar of Commerce in the Slovak Soviet Republic.

Active in the Communist Party of Hungary in exile, 1919. Left the party after 1933. Returned to Hungary shortly before World War II.

FERENC JANCSIK (1882–1938) Metal worker, chairman of the organizing committee of the Metal Workers' Union. Member of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Commander of the Budapest Red Guard; member of the central executive committee. In the Soviet Union after 1920.

FRIGYES KARIKÁS (1891-1938) Locksmith, socialist writer and journalist. Before World War I was active in French syndicalist movements. Member of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik).

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Political commissar to the Thirty-Ninth division of the Hungarian Red Army.

In exile in Austria and in the Soviet Union, 1919–1929. Leader of Hungarian communist cells in Paris, 1929–1931. In 1931 illegally returned to Hungary as secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party of Hungary; was arrested and sentenced to three years. After release returned to the Soviet Union.

JOZSEF KELEN (1892–1941) Brother of Ottó Korvin, engineer, leading member of the Galileo Circle, leader of antimilitarist "revolutionary technocrats." Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar for Social Production.

In 1919 was arrested and tried; was exchanged to the Soviet Union in 1922. Technical advisor to the Soviet trade mission in Germany, 1923–1929. In 1929 was director of major power works and head of *Teploenergoproekt*. Editor of the journal of the Electronics Section, Soviet Academy of Sciences. In 1935 received the Order of the Red Banner of Labor. Was said to be Ordzhonikidze's personal friend.

SÁNDOR KELLNER (1887–1919) Active in the Typographers' Union. In 1917 volunteered in Russia to serve as agitator in behalf of the Saratov Bolshevik organization. Commander of the Saratov Red Guard; member of the credentials committee of the All-Russian Prisoner of War Congress (April 14–18, 1918). Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary; chairman of the communist faction of the Typographers' Union.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Government commissioner of Sopron County. Belonged to the party's extremist wing. In the fall of 1919 was caught and killed by a roving "White" terrorist unit.

OTTO KORVIN (1894–1919) Son of a lumber-yard operator; as a clerk in the Budapest Lumber Bank, joined Ervin Szabó's antimilitarist group in 1917. After the arrests of January, 1918, led the revolutionary socialist group in Budapest. Member of the central committee of the Communist Party of Hungary. Head of the section in charge of leaflets and propaganda-material distribution.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Chief of the political department of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. As the head of the secret police, was said to have been responsible for a great deal of needless killings and brutalities. Arrested in August, 1919. Executed in December, 1919.

BÉLA KUN (1886–1939) Son of a lower-middle-class town clerk in Szilágycsehi County in Transylvania. Joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in 1902 and became active in local politics in Kolozsvár. Married a young music teacher from a Christian middle-class family in May, 1913. Contributor to the local socialist press and selected once to serve as a delegate to the annual socialist congress. Subsequently employed as a clerk at the Kolozsvár office of the Workers' Accident and Disability Insurance Bureau. Shortly before the outbreak of the war, was alleged to have misappropriated a small sum from the Bureau's funds. Litigation and disciplinary measures were dropped when Kun volunteered to serve in the army.

Was interned after the fall of the Soviet Republic by the Austrian authorities. Upon returning to Russia in the fall of 1920, was named political commissar to a Red Army division in southern Russia. As military governor of Crimea, was said to have ordered the execution of captured officers of Wrangel's White Army.

During the 1920s was entrusted with supervising and coordinating the project of translating and publishing Lenin's works in foreign languages, and later coedited a collection of Comintern documents. On the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, Kun—along with Klara Zetkin—was awarded the Order of the Red Banner for services rendered as president of Foreign Groups, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), during the first phase of the civil war. In the early 1930s published several articles on the history of the Comintern, on various current problems of international communism, and wrote introductions and commentaries to Russian-language editions of Hungarian poetry and literary studies.

As a high Comintern official, received important assignments such as the coordination of the ill-fated "March Action" of 1921 in Germany. Although considered a hopeless leftist by Lenin, who was said to have consented to his periodic demotions, Lenin maintained an uncharacteristically tolerant, at times bemused, attitude toward him ("he is from a nation of poets and dreamers," Lenin once remarked), thus enabling him to remain in the top echelon of the Comintern until 1937.

Comintern duties also included work in the Western European, Balkan, and Chinese sections. Arrested in 1928 while traveling in Austria on Comintern business, was released and returned to Moscow, where he later succeeded in disassociating himself from his longtime friend, Bukharin, then "right oppositionist," thus retaining his position as member of the Comintern Presidium.

Was "tried" by the Presidium of the Comintern (Dimitrov and Manuilsky were the prosecutors) in the spring of 1937. Accusations against him were concerned with his allegedly disrespectful attitude toward Stalin. Other sources imply that he also betrayed signs of Hungarian nationalism and was opposed to Stalin's methods of handling foreign communists in general, and Hungarians in particular. (Curiously, Kun's last known written work was an unfinished study on Sándor Petőfi, a nineteenth-century Hungarian revolutionary poet, killed by Cossack daggers in 1849). Disappeared after this meeting, and according to Ferenc Münnich, died on Nov. 30, 1939. (Other sources sug-

gesting that Kun was tortured for more than two years in the Lublianka prison before his death tend to corroborate this date.)

His widow Irén was deported to Central Asia at that time. His daughter Ágnes was dismissed from her job in a publishing house, and her husband, Antal Hidas (a poet and official in the Soviet Writers' Union), was sent to a concentration camp. He was released in 1945 as a result of Fadeyev's intervention with Stalin's secretariat on his behalf. Irén Kun returned in March 1959 to Hungary, where she lives at the present. Kun's son Miklós (born in 1920) is a surgeon and is living in the Soviet Union.

Was officially "rehabilitated" in February, 1956. His Soviet medals and the Order of the Red Banner were posthumously restored to him and returned to his widow by the Soviet ambassador to Hungary in April, 1964. On March 21, 1964, on the forty-fifth anniversary of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, a school and a street in Leningrad were named for him.

ZSIGMOND KUNFI (1879–1927) Journalist, editor of *Szocializmus* (the socialist theoretical monthly), deputy editor of *Népszava* (the socialist daily), 1907–1919. Minister of Welfare in the Károlyi government. Chief socialist negotiator with the arrested communists.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar of Public Education. Resigned after the Congress of Soviets in June, 1919.

Leader of the *Világosság* group ("Two and One-half Internationale"-oriented socialists) and editor of *Arbeiter Zeitung*, 1919–1927. Committed suicide in 1927.

JENŐ LÁSZLÓ (1878–1919) Lawyer, head of the legal department of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. Attorney for the Metal Workers' Union; member of the "old socialist opposition," 1906–1919. Police reporter for a Budapest tabloid, 1910–1917. Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the central committee; served as legal adviser to Kun. Organized the shortlived Bratislava Soviet Republic on Dec. 31, 1918.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Political commissar to the Revolutionary Court of Budapest. Leader of the communist extremists' "antibourgeois campaign" in April–May, 1919. Was arrested, tried, and executed in the fall of 1919.

JÁNOS LÉKAI (1895–1925) Journalist, socialist youth leader, anarcho-syndicalist member of the revolutionary socialist group. Attempted to assassinate former Prime Minister Tisza. Early member of the Communist Party of Hungary. Editor of *Ifjú Proletár*, youth organization weekly of the Communist Party of Hungary.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Secretary of the Young Communist Workers Association.

Member of the executive committee of the Communist Youth International, 1919–192(?). Editor of *Új Előre* (New York), weekly of the Hungarian section of the American Communist Party, 1922–1925.

GYÖRGY LUKÁCS (1885–) Son of a wealthy Budapest banker and financier, attended the Universities of Vienna, Heidelberg, Berlin, and Göt-

tingen. Prolific contributor to several German and Hungarian journals of philosophy and author of *History of the Development of Modern Drama* (1911), *Esthetic Culture* (1913), *Theory of the Novel* (1916). Joined the Communist Party of Hungary in December, 1918; was coopted to the editorial board of the party's theoretical journal, *Internationale*. Member of the second central committee.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Deputy People‘s Commissar of Public Education. As author of *Tactics and Ethics,* provided ideological justification for the Socialist-Communist merger.

After the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, remained in Hungary to organize the underground Communist Party. Left for Austria in September, 1919. Active in factional struggles in the exile communist movement. As author of *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), contributed significantly to the establishment of party control over literature and arts in the international communist movement. Expelled from the central committee of the Communist Party of Hungary in 1921, reinstated in 1924; expelled in 1925(?), reinstated in 1928. Argued the *Blum Theses* (1928) for the realization of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in Hungary (as opposed to the maximalist program adopted at the Sixth Comintern Congress). In 1933 left Germany for the Soviet Union, and with repeated acts of self-criticism and good luck weathered the purges. Returned to Hungary in 1945 as member of the central committee of the Communist Party of Hungary. Author of *Literature and Democracy* (1948), *Responsibility of the Intellectuals* (1945), *The Historic Novel* (1947), *Dethronement of the Mind* (1954), and several smaller studies. Member of the revolutionary Imre Nagy cabinet in October, 1956. Exiled to Rumania, returned in late 1957. Shortly thereafter resumed writing and publication in behalf of the Kádár government's intellectual de-Stalinization program. In 1965 published the first two volumes of his planned triology on Marxist esthetics,.

ANTAL MOSOLYGÓ (1891–1927) Leader of the syndicalist workers in Budapest, chief shop steward at the Mátyásföld Airplane Works, leader of antimilitarist propaganda during the war, organizer of the January, 1918, strike in Budapest. Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary. Was elected vice-chairman of the central committee but gave up this position early in 1919.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Political commissar to the Gödöllő district. Refused several offers to join the Revolutionary Governing Council and remained inactive during the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

Lived in the Soviet Union from 1920 to 1927.

FERENC MŰNNICH (1886–) Before World War I was a socialist organizer in Slovakia. Member of the socialist prisoner-of-war group in Tomsk; led a Soviet Red Army unit in 1918 at the Ekaterinburg area. Returned to Hungary with Kun in November, 1918. Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary. Active in the Budapest Soldiers' Council.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Political commissar, to the Budapest Red Guard; Political commissar to the general staff of the Hungarian Red Army.

In 1919 was active in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. In the 1920s in the Soviet Union was "in leading industrial positions." Participant in the Spanish civil war as political commissar of an international unit. In 1945 was police commissioner of Budapest, and later ambassador to Rumania. In November, 1956, became First Deputy Prime Minister, member of the Politburo, and member of the central committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. From 1958 to 1960 was Prime Minister of Hungary.

JÓZSEF POGÁNY (1886–1939) Journalist, staff member of *Népszava.* War correspondent for Budapest dailies, 1914–1918. Government commissioner for the Soldiers' Councils in the Károlyi government. Firm anticommunist until February, 1919.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar of National Defense, but was forced to resign after a left-wing communist coup in early April, 1919. Subsequently served as deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, deputy People's Commissar of Public Education, and commander of the second division of the Hungarian Red Army.

Active in the Communist Party of Hungary's factional battles in Vienna and in Moscow, 1919–1922. From 1922 to 1929, as self-appointed Comintern representative to the American Communist Party (under the alias of John Pepper), became one of the most important figures in the American party. Minor official at the Commissariat for Foreign Trade in Moscow, 193(?)–1937(?).

ERNŐ PÓR (1888–1943) White-collar worker, socialist activist. Secretary of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the central committee in charge of agitprop work in Slovakia.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs; People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Slovak Soviet Republic.

Active in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, 1919–1922. After 1922 worked in leading positions in the Soviet economy.

JÓZSEF RABINOVITS (1884–1940) Goldsmith, official at the Workers' Insurance Bureau. Vice-president of the Precision Mechanics' Union. Active in prisoner-of-war groups in Tomsk, Omsk, and Moscow. Member of the executive committee of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, party secretary, and member of the central committee in charge of youth groups.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Secretary of the Socialist-Communist Party of Hungary; deputy People's Commissar of the Interior.

Was arrested, tried, and exchanged to the Soviet Union, 1919–1922. After 1922 worked in "responsible position" at the Soviet trade unions, International Red Aid, and Radio Moscow.

MÁTYÁS RÁKOSI (1892–) One of several children of a small village shopkeeper in southern Hungary. In 1909 enrolled at the Oriental Academy of Commerce in Budapest. In 1910 joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. Secretary of the Galileo Circle, 1911-1912. From 1912 to 1914 worked

for a commercial firm in Hamburg and later in London, and was active in socialist circles. Worked as a clerk for the Royal Hungarian Commercial Museum in London. In 1914 joined the Sixth Infantry Regiment of the Hungarian army as sublieutenant; in 1915 was captured by the Russians and sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in Chita. In February, 1917, was transferred to Dauria, escaped in October, and reached Petrograd in early 1918. Joined the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik) and was sent back to Hungary as an agitator in the spring of 1918. In the summer of 1918 was forced to stay in Szeged, where he subsequently formed a communist organization in the fall of 1918. From November, 1918, to February, 1919, was propagandist for the Communist Party of Hungary, active in the provinces, mining areas, and Budapest fourth district. Was arrested on February 20 with the communists.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Deputy People's Commissar of Commerce, later political commissar to the Sixth Division of the Hungarian Red Army. Commander of the Hungarian Red Guard. In 1920 represented Hungary at the Second Comintern Congress. Later, as Comintern international instructor, was active in communist parties of France, Italy, and Germany.

In 1925 illegally returned to Hungary, was arrested and sentenced to eight and one-half years; was retried in 1935 and sentenced to fifteen years. In 1940 was exchanged to the Soviet Union. Active in the Comintern and in the exiled Communist Party of Hungary in the Soviet Union, 1940–1943. Leading Hungarian Stalinist from 1945 until summer of 1956. Since then has been living in exile in Soviet Central Asia. In 1962 was expelled from the Communist Party's successor, the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party. Was rumored to have died in August 1963, but this has not been confirmed by the Hungarian party or the world press.

JÓZSEF RÉVAI (1898–1959) Son of a Jewish middle-class family, worked during the war as an accountant's trainee in a Budapest bank. Broke with the Lajos Kassák's avant-garde socialist *MA* literary group in 1917; with three other aspiring essayists and poets, formed an anarchist literary group and joined the revolutionary socialist campaign. Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary: contributor to *Internationale* and head of the party's Agitator School for Young Workers.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Staff member of *Vörös Ujság* and leading spokesman for the communist extreme left.

After 1919 spent several years in Austria, Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia. About 1934, became Béla Kun's personal secretary at the Comintern. He and Ernő Gerő were said to have been closely associated with the Soviet secret police during the purges and aided in the elimination of most "old Hungarian communists," then living in the Soviet Union. From Prague, directed the Communist Party's antipopulist campaign in Hungary, 1937–1939. In 1945 was editorial writer of *Szabad Nép* (party daily) and leading Stalinist ideologue in charge of literature and arts. Was active in the antirevisionist campaign of 1957–1958, although he was refused his former position as "cultural tsar" of Hungary.

IMRE SALLAI (? –1932) Active member of the revolutionary socialist group in 1917–1918. Arrested in May, 1918 for anti-militarist propaganda. Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the editorial committee of *Vörös Ujság.*

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Deputy chief of the political department, People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs.

From 1919 to 1921 was head of the publication program of Communist Party of Hungary in Vienna, organizer for the Young Communist International in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and a Hungarian delegate to the Third Congress of the Young Communist International. From 1921 to 1924 was head of the Hungarian section and member of the Central Executive Committee, International Red Aid, and research associate of the Marx-Engels Institute. From 1924 to 1928 was scientific associate of the Marx-Engels Institute. Organizer of underground communist press in Hungary, 1928–1929. Active in "Soviet efforts for the socialist transformation of the countryside in the Volga area," 1929–1930. Head of the secretariat of the Communist Party of Hungary, 1931–1932. Was arrested in July, 1932; was tried and executed with Sándor Fürst.

ERNŐ SEIDLER (1886–1940) White-collar worker, socialist activist. Member of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik). Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the central committee in charge of finances.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: leading position in the Budapest Red Guard. Hungarian envoy to the Bavarian Soviet Republic in April, 1919; division commander of the Hungarian Red Army. Member of the central executive committee, June 21–Aug. 1, 1919.

After 1919 was active in the Communist Party of Hungary in Austria and "worked in leading economic positions in the Soviet Union."

SÁNDOR SZABADOS (1874–1939) Lawyer, socialist journalist. In 1906 left staff position with *Népszava* following ideological disagreements with the socialist executive. Joined the "old socialist opposition." Translated several works by Marx. Kun called him one of his first teachers of socialism.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Member of the Revolutionary Governing Council. Head of the Office of State Propaganda for Socialism.

In 1919 was arrested, tried, and received a life sentence; was exchanged to the Soviet Union in 1922. In the Soviet Union, was head of the French-German book department of the literary publishing house Glavlit.

TIBOR SZAMUELY (1890–1919) Son of a Jewish middle-class family (father, grain merchant), was expelled from several schools for anti-Catholic statements. In 1908 began career as journalist. Wrote for several provincial newspapers (including *Népszava*); was involved in several libel suits. Later worked for a small financial scandal sheet, then was employed by a Catholic press service as copywriter. Assistant editor of a Freethinker weekly, 1913. Planned to publish an anti-Catholic treatise, "Virgin Mary's Country in the Priests' Yoke," in 1914 but was drafted into the army in December. Captured

on Russian front in 1915. In early 1918 joined Béla Kun and became military commissar of the Hungarian Group. From May to August, 1918, was political commissar to the First Moscow Internationalist Battalion. From September to November, 1918, was a member of the Russian delegation in Switzerland; was expelled and returned to Moscow in December. In the same month, left for Germany and participated in the Spartacus League debates of Dec. 26–30, 1918. Returned to Hungary in early January. Was soon arrested by socialist police (for murders in Russia), but was released at the end of the month. Head of the second central committee from Feb. 20 to March 21, 1919.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: Deputy People's Commissar of War, later in charge of housing problems of Budapest. From May to June, 1919, was head of a special mobile squad to suppress counterrevolutionary attempts in the countryside. Was said to have personally executed several suspected counter-revolutionaries. Was captured Aug. 2, 1919, while attempting to cross the Austrian border; committed suicide.

BÉLA SZÁNTÓ (1881–1951) Journalist, socialist activist, member and leader of "old socialist opposition." Leader of the communist faction of the Budapest Soldiers' Council during the Károlyi government; founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the central committee.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: After June 1919, People's Commissar for National Defense. Leading member of the communist left opposition.

In 1920 was active in Communist Party of Hungary in Vienna and in factional battles in the Soviet Union. Worked in the Comintern (unspecified position). After 1945 was a leading figure in communist collectivization efforts; Hungarian envoy to Warsaw.

BÉLA VÁGÓ (1889–1939) Socialist journalist, secretary of the Debrecen Hungarian Social Democratic Party organization, member of the "old socialist opposition." Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the central committee, leader of the communist faction of the Budapest Workers' Council, Dec. 13–Jan. 28, 1919.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar for Internal Affairs; commander of the first army of the Hungarian Red Army.

In 1919 was active in the communist parties of Austria and Germany. After 1933(?) was a minor clerk in the Soviet Union.

KÁROLY VÁNTUS (1879–1927) Carpenter, socialist journalist. In 1907 was secretary of the central executive committee of the Hungarian Social Democratic Party. "The party let him be drafted in 1914." Was secretary of the Hungarian Group, Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik), director of the Hungarian Agitator School in Moscow. Founding member of the Communist Party of Hungary, member of the central committee.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar of Agriculture.

In 1919 was arrested and tried; was exchanged to the Soviet Union in 1922.

JENŐ VARGA (1879–1964) Socialist journalist, economist. Joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in 1906. Teacher of economics in Buda-

pest gymnasium, contributor to *Népszava* and *Szocializmus* on problems of world economics. Appointed as professor of political economy at the University of Budapest during the November revolution of 1918. Was author of the socialist agrarian program. Joined the Communist Party of Hungary in February, 1919.

Hungarian Soviet Republic: People's Commissar of Finance; chairman of the Supreme Economic Council.

In Austria wrote *Economic Problems under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat,* 1919–1920. Researcher for the Comintern staff and contributor to *Inprekorr,* and *Rundschau* (1921–1939). Official at the Russian trade mission in Berlin, 1922–1927. Director of the Institute of World Economics and World Politics, USSR Academy of Sciences, 1927–1947. In 1927 became a full member of the Communist Academy. In 1947 was censured by Stalin on the "bourgeois reformist views" advanced in his *Changes in the Economics of Capitalism as a Result of World War II,* and was removed from the editorship of *World Economics and World Politics.* In 1949 admitted his "errors" and was sent to Hungary, where he became one of the architects of the maximalist and subsequently bankrupt first Five-year Plan. In 1956 was restored to his position in the Institute of Economics in Moscow. Was commissioned to write an article rehabilitating Béla Kun in February, 1956. Wrote two studies on the capitalist business cycles and on the Soviet Seven-year Plan, 1957–1964.

APPENDIX K

LEADERS OF THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC WHO DIED DURING OR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE GREAT PURGES IN THE SOVIET UNION

Bajáki, Ferenc	1883–1938
Bierman, István	1891–1937
Bokányi, Dezső	1871–1940
Chlepkó Ede	1883–1937
Fiedler, Rezső	1881–1940
Hamburger, Jenő	1883–1936
Haubrich, József	1883–1939
Hevesi, Ákos	1884–1937 (died in Spain)
Jancsik, Ferenc	1882–1938
Karikás, Frigyes	1891–1938
Kelen, József	1892–1938 (or 1941?)
Kun, Béla	1886–1939
Lengyel, Gyula	1888–1941
Pogány, József	1886–1939
Rabinovits, József	1884–1940
Seidler, Ernő	1886–1940
Szabados, Sándor	1874–1939
Székely, Béla	1889–1939
Vágó, Béla	1881–1939

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Index